

The Berean Expositor

Acts xvii. 10, 11

“Study to show thyself approved unto God,
a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the Word of truth”

II Tim. ii. 15

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INDEX

CASTAWAY?, A	7
CONDUCT	11
ELECTION, AND GOD'S KINGDOM PURPOSE	16, 21
EPHESIANS, PRACTICAL TRUTH IN--	
No.6. The New Man	192
No.7. The Temple fitly framed; The Body fitly joined	196
No.8. The Mystery, and the worthy walk	201
No.9. Filled with all fullness	205
EXAMPLES	26
FIRST PLACE, THE	30
FOUNDATION, OUR	34
FOUNDATION TRUTH--	
No.1. The types of Scripture	39
FOURTH GOSPEL, THE--	
No.7. iii. 14-30	43
No.8. iii. 28 - iv. 24	47
No.9. iv. 25 - v. 15	51
No.10. v. 16-47	55
No.11. vi. 1-35	59
No.12. vi. 36-71	63
No.13. vii. 1-44	67
No.14. vii. 45 - viii. 24	71
No.15. viii. 25-48	75
No.16. viii. 49 - ix. 39	79
No.17. ix. 39 - x. 21	83
JOY	6
MATTHEW, THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO--	
No.27. xvii. 1 - xviii. 9	87
No.28. xviii. 10 - xix. 8	91
No.29. xix. 9-29	95
No.30. xix. 30 - xxi. 17	98
No.31. xxi. 18 - xxii. 14	103

No.32. xxii. 15 - xxiii. 32	107
No.33. xxiii. 33 - xxiv. 14	111
No.34. xxiv. 15-33	115
No.35. xxiv. 34 - xxv. 30	121
No.36. xxv. 31-46	126
No.37. xxvi. 1-28	131
 MINISTRY OF CONSOLATION--	
No.3. Together with them to meet the Lord	210
 NEW THINGS	137
 OUR STANDING IN CHRIST JESUS	141
 PRISON EXPERIENCES--	
No.2. Joseph and his brethren	145
No.3. Samson and the Philistines	148
No.4. Micaiah. Hoshea. Hanani.	152
No.5. God's servants imprisoned for speaking the truth	155
 RANDOM THOUGHTS--	
No.2. Christ the Wisdom of God	159
No.3. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind	161
No.4. Knowledge shall be increased	163
 RIGHT TIME, THE	166
 RUNNING AWAY	170
 FIRST SAMUEL--	
No.12. viii. 19 - ix. 20	173
No.13. ix. 21 - x. 7	175
No.14. x. 8-16	178
No.15. x. 17-22	179
No.16. x. 23-27	180
No.17. xi. 1-6	182
No.18. xi. 6-15	184
No.19. xii. 1-25	186
 WILL OF THE LORD, THE	4
 WORSHIP	189

The Will of the Lord.

Understanding what the will of the Lord is (Eph. v. 17).
pp. 59, 60

The daily walk of the Christian requires wisdom, and the A.V. says that we should walk “circumspectly”, whereas the R.V. reads “carefully” (v. 15). The apostle Paul adds “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (16). It is suggested that this might be translated “buying up the opportunities”. The present day is full of dangers, seen and unseen, and we know not for how long we shall be given opportunities to serve the Lord. Hence, the urgency to redeem the time by continued, loyal service. We should not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Each of us needs to ask the Lord to reveal His will to us. He takes a personal interest in us, for He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world (i. 4), and He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. We require wisdom so that we do not “lean on our own understanding” (Prov. iii. 5) but we desire that He will show us His will and purpose. He has planned and prepared the good works He wishes us to do (Eph. ii. 10), so we can be confident that God’s plan for each one includes service to the Lord in this present day, using our God given ability.

While we are concerned to walk with the Lord and do His will, we should remember that the will of God includes both things on earth and things in heaven. Much of Eph. i. is a description of the will of the Father.

- (1) We learn in Eph. i. 5 that we have been predestinated unto the adoption of children (sons) by Jesus Christ to Himself, *according to the good pleasure of His will*.
- (2) Then, in verse 9, He has made known unto us the *mystery (secret) of His will* according to His good pleasure; and in the following verse, we learn that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He will gather together in one all things in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth.
- (3) This leads to a statement that we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the *counsel (or purpose) of His own will* (11).
- (4) There is a sudden change as we come to Eph. ii. 1-3. Here, Paul takes us back to “in time past”. We once were children (sons) of disobedience and followed the desires (literally, the *will*) of the flesh. Verse 4 commences, “But God”—what a big change! For God is rich in mercy and has great love for us. He has quickened us, raised us up, and made us sit together with Christ in heavenly places.
- (5) Paul was an apostle by the *will of God*. We are not apostles, but we can be the Lord’s servants, who do the *will of God* from the heart (Eph. i. 6 and vi. 6).

The Greek word *thelema*, meaning “will”, occurs seven times in Ephesians, and forms the following outline:

- A | i. 1. Apostle. By the will of God.
- B | i. 5. Adoption. Good pleasure of His will.
- C | i. 9. Secret of His will. Fullness of times.
- D | i. 11. The counsel of His own will.
- C | ii. 3. Will of the flesh.—in time past.
- B | v. 17. Understanding what the will of the Lord is.
- A | vi. 6. Servants of Christ. Doing the will of God.

Charles H. Welch has set out his structures on page 85 and 86 of *In Heavenly Places* in the following manner:

***Thelema.* (will)**

- A1 | i. 1. Apostleship.
- A2 | i. 5, 9, 11. Doctrine.
- A3 | ii. 3; v. 17; vi. 6. Practice.

A2 | Doctrinal.

- A2 | a | i. 5. Good pleasure of His **will**.--Predestination to sonship.
- b | i. 9. Mystery of His **will**.--The fullness of the seasons.
- a | i. 11. Counsel of His **will**.--Predestination to inheritance.

A3 | Practical.

- A3 | c | ii. 3. Doing the **will** of the flesh.--"Once."
- d | v. 17. Understanding the **will** of the Lord.--Present rule.
- c | vi. 6. Doing the **will** of God.--"Now."

George T. Foster

JOY.

p. 200

It is surprising, in one sense, to note the emphasis which the apostle Paul puts upon “joy”. When we come to think of the life he lived, the nature of the revelation made known to and through him—the stewardship of the Mystery—his bonds and imprisonment, the loneliness and the abuse that seemed his daily meat, we should not be surprised, speaking after the manner of men, if “joy” never entered his vocabulary.

But, thank God, we do not speak after the manner of men, having seen enough of the grace of God to be prepared for songs in the night and psalms from the innermost prison. Again and again in the epistles to the Philippians Paul bids his readers “rejoice”, even though some brethren (not merely pagan enemies) were endeavouring to add affliction to his bonds.

The ministry for which *The Berean Expositor* was first called into existence, and which justifies its continuance, is one so fraught with problems, and which makes such demands upon both reader and writer, that it is absolutely necessary that into all the hard study, and in some cases isolation that the truth entails, should be brought the remembrance that faith is not cold but warm and living, and that there is a “joy of faith” (Phil. i. 25), as well as the *subject-matter* of the faith, the *fight* of faith and *steadfastness* in the faith. Faith not only leads to justification, acceptance and life, blessings indeed beyond computation, but to “joy and peace in believing” (Rom. xv. 13) with which we should be as much filled, as “with the spirit”.

Charles H. Welch

How should we esteem the authority of the Bible?

“Not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God” (I Thess. ii. 13).

A Castaway?

“... but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire” (I Cor. iii. 15).

pp. 151 - 155

The heading “A Castaway?” may possibly remind us of a popular radio programme called *Desert Island Discs*. It is based on the idea that the person interviewed suffers shipwreck and is a castaway on a desert island. Shipwreck is mentioned in Scripture (either factually or figuratively), and the factual example is described in detail in Acts xxvii. and xxviii. 1. But Paul says in II Cor. xi. 25 that he suffered shipwreck three times. Shipwreck is mentioned as a figure of speech in I Tim. i. 19 where Paul encourages Timothy to be faithful to the charge given to him, so that he might “war a good warfare” (18), and he gives examples of Hymenaeus and Alexander who “having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck”. When one fails to hold fast to truth, this experience of shipwreck not only affects the unfaithful person, it influences others who then share spiritual shipwreck.

The castaway who reaches land despite the danger of being shipwrecked, does not carry with him all his possessions. He is saved, but suffers loss. When Paul was shipwrecked and escaped to Malta, the ship and all its cargo were lost.

The only time we read the English word “castaway” in the N.T. is in I Cor. ix. 27. Paul had been comparing the Christian life with a race. He does not run “in an uncertain” manner (26). All his energy is concentrated in an effort to win the race. His final words were “lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway”.

This word castaway is a translation of the Greek *adokimos*, which means “disapproved”. It is translated “rejected” in Heb. vi. 8. There are six passages where it is translated “reprobate”, for example in Rom. i. 28 and II Cor. xiii. 5, 6 & 7. We quote two passages in detail:

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away ... Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, *reprobate* concerning the faith” (II Tim. iii. 5, 7, 8).

“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work *reprobate*” (Titus i. 16).

These two passages describe those who make a profession of faith, but who have not received and believed the truth. Their lack of faith is reflected in their manner of life. They are “corrupt, abominable, reprobate”. These men are “disapproved” so that all their works are wasted. Like the castaway, they may be saved but all their work is lost.

Before we leave *adokimos* (disapproved) we should mention the reverse *dokimos* (approved), and the example that comes readily to mind is II Tim. ii. 15:

“Study (be diligent) to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

We commented that when a traveler is shipwrecked, he usually loses all his possessions, yet he is saved. We come to a parallel passage in I Cor. iii. 10-15. Paul says he was like a wise master-builder, and he laid a good foundation. That foundation was Jesus Christ. But he warned that every man who builds on that foundation should take care, for whatever is built on it would be tested by fire.

- (1) If a man built with gold, silver or precious stones, when the test of fire came, his work would abide and he would receive a reward.
- (2) If the builder used wood, hay, or stubble, the fire would destroy his work and the builder would suffer loss.
- (3) The builder who suffered loss through building with the wrong materials, would himself be saved, “yet, so as by fire” (I Cor. iii. 15).

Here is a picture of the Christian who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, whose salvation is secure, but whose life of service (or lack of approved service) is tested, as it will be when we meet our Lord and Saviour face to face. In another article we have emphasized that our standing in the Lord Jesus Christ is not affected by our ‘feelings’, but we rely on the finished and complete work of Christ. We cannot add to His work. We are saved by grace through faith, which is the gift of God. “Not of works, lest any man should boast”. But Eph. ii. 10 continues:

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

God has a plan for each one of us. He looks to us to serve Him with good works according to His plan. These works are not to secure our salvation, but are the fruit of our salvation. We should be like the builder who builds with gold or silver or precious stones. If we serve Him faithfully, we shall have His approval, and there is a reward for faithful service.

There is the danger that in this busy life our minds may be occupied with the things of earth, and activities of service for the Lord may be crowded out. Paul gave the Philippians a solemn warning:

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Phil. iii. 17-19).

Their end is “destruction”. This means waste, but is translated in various ways. They are not enemies of Christ, but of the *cross* of Christ. They do not take up the cross; they do not suffer for His sake. They will not be “destroyed”, but saved “so as by fire”. All their work will be wasted. There will be no reward for there will be no faithful service.

We have insufficient space to examine this word in detail, but should any reader wish to study it by examining the context where it is used we give the references below in tabular form:

Occurrences of the Greek ‘*apoleia*’.

Translated as “Perdition” (8 times): John xvii. 12; Phil. i. 28; II Thessalonians ii. 3; I Tim. vi. 9; Heb. x. 39; II Pet. iii. 7; Rev. xvii. 8, 11.

“Destruction” (5 times): Matt. vii. 13; Rom. ix. 22; Phil. iii. 19; II Pet. ii. 1; iii. 16.

“Waste” (twice): Matt. xxvi. 8; Mark xiv. 4.

Damnably, pernicious, damnation: II Pet. ii. 1, 2, 3.

We will quote the reference in Timothy in full:

“And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and *perdition*” (I Tim. vi. 8, 9).

In preaching the gospel, it is right to emphasize the great love wherewith He loved us (Eph. ii. 4). We can never be thankful enough to our God and Saviour, Who left His heavenly home and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil.ii.7,8). Why was this necessary? Disobedience had brought sin into the world. God does not view disobedience, or sin, lightly. He could not say “I forgive you” unless the debt had been paid first. So, while thanking God for His love, let us remember that sin and all that goes with it is hated by God. So in Eph. ii. there is reference to the children of disobedience and children of wrath.

Surely, as God sees our Christian lives, He must be pleased when He sees loyal and faithful service. But must He not also be displeased if He sees us slipping or failing in our witness and service?

If we study the Scripture in those places where God is said to be angry, we may be surprised. Such men as Moses, Aaron, and Solomon were loyal men serving the Lord, and we hold them in high esteem. Would we class them as men who failed? We realized that Israel as a nation often provoked the Lord and incurred His anger. It would take too much space to describe in detail the examples we have quoted, but we give a brief summary:

MOSES. “I am not eloquent ... slow of speech ... And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses” (Exod. iv. 10, 14).

MOSES. Entry into the promised land. “Also the Lord was angry with me for your sakes” (Deut. i. 37).

AARON. “And the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time” (Deut. ix. 20).

MIRIAM and AARON. “And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them” (Numbers xii. 9).

SOLOMON. “And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel” (I Kings xi. 9).

If we read Eph. v. 3-6 we are reminded of a list of evil practices which God hates, even as much as idolatry. We quote Eph. v. 6:

“Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”

Paul then wrote about the walk “as children of light” and verse 10 is a welcome guide:

“proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.”

This word “acceptable” is the Greek *euarestos* and occurs seven times. Here is another passage containing this word:

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and *acceptable*, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. xii. 2).

May we be given wisdom to walk in a way that is acceptable to the Lord, doing His will, and being obedient to Him and His word. So, when our work is tested, we may not suffer loss, but rejoice as we receive His approval.

Conduct. **pp. 121 -126**

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man ...” (Eph. iv. 22).

Some of our readers may not have seen the series of articles by Stuart Allen entitled “Archaic and Obsolete Words of the Authorized Version” which appeared in *The Berean Expositor* about ten years ago. In Volume XLVIII, page 197, there is a paragraph headed “conversation”, in which he points out that in 1611 conversation always referred to conduct or manner of life, and not merely to talking.

The Greek word *anastrophe* occurs thirteen times in the New Testament, of which six are in I Peter, two in II Peter, and five in other epistles. Both Dr. Robert Young and Dr. E. W. Bullinger agree that this word should be translated behavior, or manner of life, or conduct. In fact, it has been translated “conversation”.

Another word *anastrepho* occurs eleven times, and in two passages it is translated “have one’s conversation”. An examples may be seen in II Cor. i. 12.

As I Peter contains most of the occurrences of “conversation” we will look at those first. To appreciate the context, we observe that I Pet. i. 7 speaks of the “trial of your faith”, though it be “tried with fire”, and in I Pet. iv. 12 “think it not strange concerning the fiery trial”. There are frequent references to suffering, and in I Pet. iv. 13 Peter writes of being partakers of Christ’s sufferings.

When Peter addressed the people in Solomon’s porch of the temple, after the lame man had been healed, he called on them to repent, and promised that their repentance would be followed by the return of Jesus Christ. Peter therefore expected that the day of the Lord would come soon. There would be judgment and a time of testing or trial. This should be kept in mind when reading all the epistles written during the “Acts period”. Let us now review the six passages in I Peter:

“But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (conduct); because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (i. 15, 16).

The verses leading up to this quotation exhort that “having girded up the loins of your minds”, the readers should be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to come at the revelation of Jesus Christ. In their conduct they should be obedient, and discourage those desires that they used to have through ignorance.

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation (conduct) received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ” (i. 18, 19).

These verses speak for themselves. The Jews were educated to respect their traditions handed down from generation to generation, but now their salvation depended on the

finished work of Christ. The effect on their conduct should be “to love one another with a pure heart fervently” (22, 23).

“Having your conversation (conduct) honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (ii. 12).

They may be wrongly accused of evil, but if their conduct is honest and good, their good works would be evidence which enemies could not ignore, and in the end God would be glorified. In verse 13 Peter states that they should submit to every human institution for the sake of the Lord.

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation (conduct) of the wives” (iii. 1).

Thus, if a wife has been converted but the husband remains an unbeliever, the faithful conduct of the wife may be a means that the Lord may use in the conversion of the husband.

“While they behold your chaste conversation (conduct) coupled with fear” (iii. 2).

This verse of course follows on from our previous quotation. In the verses that follow, we have a more detailed description of the kind of conduct that Peter advises, and he gives examples of O.T. characters such as Sarah. The Christian wife should avoid outward show, in dress, hair style, or wearing of jewels. What matters is the inward part, the heart, and in God’s sight a meek and quiet spirit is “of great price” (4).

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts ... having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation (conduct) in Christ” (iii. 15, 16).

Peter goes on to say that it is better to suffer for well doing than for evil doing. Christ Himself suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust (18).

It is interesting to compare these six passages to ascertain any pattern. Probably there are alternative structures, but the following introversion may be one solution:

- A | i. 15. Obedient children.
Be holy in all conduct.
- B | i. 18. Vain conduct, tradition.
Redeemed. Precious blood of Christ.
- C | ii. 12. Conduct among Gentiles.
Submit.
- C | iii. 1. Conduct of wives.
Submit.
- B | iii. 2. Chaste conduct—fear.
Meek and quiet spirit “of great price”.
- A | iii. 16. Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.
Your good conduct in Christ.

We will now refer briefly to the two passages in II Peter:

“And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation (conduct) of the wicked”
(II Pet. ii. 7).

In verse 8, Peter gives a picture of righteous Lot, hearing and seeing the unlawful and wicked deeds of the dwellers in Sodom and Gomorrha, who was vexed (or tormented) thereby. In the present day we live in an immoral world, and to some extent share with Lot the vexation that comes through seeing in the newspapers, or on television, the evil practices that have become commonplace. Surely we live in perilous times.

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation (conduct) and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God” (iii. 11, 12).

Peter gives a picture of the destruction of the heavens and earth by fire. As there are various hopes, we may meet Christ and acknowledge Him as Head of the Church which is His Body, or we may have a place in the Heavenly Jerusalem (Christ being the chief corner stone). Others may meet Him as King in His Kingdom (“Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven”), but whatever our hope or relationship with Christ may be, we all share the hope that we shall see Him face to face. And when we see Him face to face, shall we rejoice or shall we be ashamed? What manner of conduct is worthy of our hope? If we live in close communion with our Lord Jesus Christ, we should become more like Him and others should see the reflection of Christ in us. What manner of persons should we be? Let us remember that God foreknew us, and He predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. viii. 29).

To complete our study, we now turn to the remaining five passages:

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation (conduct)”
(Hebrews xiii. 7, A.V.).

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the Word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith” (R.V.).

We should support our spiritual leaders both in prayer and in practical ways. The ministry of our leaders is based on the Word of God, but here Paul is saying that ministry consists firstly of spoken ministry of the Word, and secondly, of a manner of life or conduct which is a vital part of ministry. The behaviour of our leaders should be such that we should endeavour to imitate them and glorify God in our manner of life, or conduct.

“Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation (conduct) his works with meekness of wisdom” (James iii. 13).

In this chapter, James has been writing about the unruly tongue. It is a small member, but what great things it can achieve! How much damage can be caused by a little fire! (James iii. 5, 6). The tongue gives expression to our thoughts, both good and bad. May

God give us wisdom which may bear fruit in our lives and produce a manner of life and good conduct which shall be to the honour and glory of Christ.

“For ye have heard of my conversation (conduct) in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it” (Gal. i. 13).

Paul was always conscious of his past life, for he had been an ardent Pharisee. He wrote in I Cor. xv. 9 “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God”. The phrase “in time past” in the quotation from Galatians above reminds us of Eph. ii. 2, where it says that in time past we walked according to the course of this world. We can all praise God for His grace, for His redemption, for the forgiveness of sins, and pray that we may in our conduct or walk, live worthily of our calling.

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation (conduct), in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (I Tim. iv. 12).

Paul encourages Timothy and gives helpful advice. As we have seen in other references, the manner of life (conduct) should be an example to others, and should exhibit love and faith. The Word of God is the basis of his spiritual life and his ministry.

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation (conduct) the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Eph. iv. 22),

and Paul continues “and be renewed in the spirit of your mind”. Then he adds “and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”.

Ephesians iv.-vi. deals with the practical aspect of truth for the present day, and in these few verses we have the very basis of our salvation and our faith. Our conduct in time past was according to the old nature, or the old man. Now, we are renewed by the Holy Spirit and we put on the new man, which is a new creation. As we live by God’s grace and are enjoying the renewal of the spirit of our mind, our lives should reflect that grace to His honour and glory. So our conduct should be to His praise.

This article would be incomplete if we failed to mention that there are two Greek words translated “conversation” with a meaning different from the passages we have been studying. *Politeuma* occurs only once and is translated conversation. It means citizenship or commonwealth:

“For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. iii. 20).

The other word, *politeuo*, means “to act as a citizen” and we quote:

“Only let your conversation (action bearing in mind your citizenship) be as it becometh the gospel of Christ” (Phil. i. 27).

Our hope is to be realized in the heavenly places where we sit at the right hand of God. We are citizens of heaven, and we therefore should not live as citizens of earth, but of heaven. We rejoice in the blessings that the Scriptures describe, but the greater our

knowledge, the greater our blessing, then, the greater is our responsibility. Our conduct should balance our vocation. If the vocation is great, so must our conduct be. How we need to pray for all-sufficient grace, that we may conduct ourselves worthily of our high calling.

(II Cor. i. 12) For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

(Gal. i. 13) For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

(Eph. ii. 3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

(Eph. iv. 22) That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

(I Tim. iv. 12) Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

(Heb. xiii. 7) Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation.

(James iii. 13) Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

(I Pet. i. 15) But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

(I Pet. i. 18) Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers;

(I Pet. ii. 12) Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

(I Pet. iii. 1) Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

(I Pet. iii. 2) While they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear.

(I Pet. iii. 16) Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

(II Pet. ii. 7) And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

(II Pet. iii. 11) *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness,

(Phil. i. 27) Only let your conversation (*politeuo*) be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

(Phil. iii. 20) For our conversation (*politeuma*, citizenship or commonwealth) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Election, and God's Kingdom Purpose. **pp. 126 - 132**

The doctrines of election and predestination have always given rise to difficulties among Christians. The endless debates about election and free will have led to divisions between the children of God, yet we have to face the fact that serious study of the Word of God is impossible when election is ignored, for it occurs frequently in both the Old and New Testaments and occupies a most important place in the purposes of God. A serious mistake has been made in teaching that the Word of God restricts election to one thing only, namely salvation. Those who assert this should use a concordance and note the number of times the word election is connected directly with salvation alone, and they will certainly be surprised at what they find.

We need to recognize that the Bible is not just a haphazard collection of books under one cover. It is a divine unity revealing a tremendous plan that God is carrying out. Once this is perceived, one has a solid basis for understanding the Word of God. With this we must link God's almighty power and His sovereignty. It is so easy to make plans and then be unable to carry them out for various reasons, inability being one of them. With His plan, God has made certain promises and these are absolutely secure because He is almighty and omniscient, knowing all the future as well as the past.

We need to be like Abraham who, as Paul tells us, was fully convinced that *God was able to do what He had promised* (Rom. iv. 21) even though the outward circumstances seemingly made the fulfillment impossible, for God had promised him a son, yet he himself was physically incapable of having one.

God revealed Himself to Jacob at Bethel in a dream and finished by promising "I will not leave you until *I have done all that I have promised*" (Gen. xxviii. 15, N.E.B.). Job knew that God always kept His word, for he said "I know that *you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted*" (Job xlii. 2, N.I.V.). Later on, the prophets gave witness to the same thing. God says, "I am He ... Who confirms the word of My servant and *makes the plan of My envoys succeed*" (Isa. xlv. 26, Jerusalem Bible). Also in this prophecy He is recorded as saying "Have you not heard long ago? *I did it all*. In days gone by *I planned* it and now *I have brought it to pass*" (Isa. xxxvii. 26, N.E.B.). And further on we read that God said "I am God, and there is no one like Me. *I reveal the end from the beginning*, from ancient times I reveal what is to be. I say, *My purpose shall take effect ... I have spoken and I will bring about it. I have a plan to carry out and carry it out I will*" (Isa. xlv. 10, 11, N.E.B.). We may remember too the well known words of Isa. lv. 8-11, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways ... So is My word that goes out from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, but *will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it*" (N.I.V.).

God told Jeremiah at the beginning of his ministry after he declared that he had seen the vision of the almond tree, "The Lord said to me, you have seen correctly, *for I am watching to see that My Word is fulfilled*" (Jer. i. 12, N.I.V.). "For I know the plans I

have for you”, declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, *plans to give you hope and a future*” (Jer. xxix. 11, N.I.V.). Ezekiel records the words of God, “I the Lord have spoken, and *I will do it*” (Ezek. xxii. 14; xxxvi. 36).

These Scriptures make it abundantly clear that God is not working in a haphazard way. He has a master plan which He conceived in past eternity. It is centred in Christ and what He would accomplish in His earthly life and witness. Eph. iii. 11 A.V. refers to it as “*His eternal purpose* which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord”, literally the “plan of the ages”, the ages being the time when the gigantic plan is being worked out by God. He has the power, the wisdom and the foresight to bring this plan to a certain and glorious goal, and not all the opposition of Satan, the powers of darkness, and the unbelieving world energized by him, can prevent this from being accomplished. Even the pagan king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, had to learn this lesson. When God had finished dealing with him, he declared, “He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; *none can stay His hand* or say to Him ‘What doest Thou?’.” (Dan. iv. 35).

God never needs to modify His plans, nor can anyone accuse Him of wrongdoing in carrying them out. Moses certainly stated the truth when he said “Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, His works are perfect and all *His ways are just. A faithful God Who does no wrong, upright and just is He*” (Deut. xxxii. 3, 4, N.I.V.). It is this One Who, later on, was revealed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, Whom the apostle Paul described as “our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus ii. 13), and it is His master plan we are considering, and we shall find that this plan is eternally linked with God’s great kingdom which finally finds its complete expression in the “new heavens and a new earth” which God will create when this present universe ceases to exist (II Pet. iii. 10-13). However, we must be very careful not to exceed the revelation of holy Scriptures concerning this kingdom, nor on the other hand to lessen what is revealed therein.

We may be sure that the fall of Satan and his angels, and then the fall of Adam, greatly complicated matters, for sin and death would certainly find no place in the great kingdom of God; and death is an enemy till the last (I Cor. xv. 26). Hence the need for the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus to remove these barriers to God’s purpose:

“For God *designed Him* to be the means of expiating sin by His sacrificial death, effective through faith” (Rom. iii. 25, N.E.B.).

Protithemi, a verb meaning to purpose or plan (translated “designed”) shows us that this all-necessary redemption was an essential part of God’s plan, otherwise any sinner could never have a place in God’s perfect kingdom.

“... God, Who hath saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but *because of His own purpose and grace* ...” (II Tim. i. 8, 9).

“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, *who have been called according to His purpose*” (Rom. viii. 28).

It is important to realize that the kingdom of God is wider than rule over the earth. Too often it is restricted in this way. But the Word of God reveals that this great kingdom includes the heavens (see the author's *The Kingdom of God in Heaven and on Earth*). In considering the kingdom theme we shall discover that election is connected with each phase of the kingdom. In the earthly part of the kingdom of God, the people of Israel dominate, but God's purposes cannot be restricted to them, for God wills that Gentile nations will be blessed with them so that finally God will be King of all the earth (Zech. xiv. 9), "...For the earth shall be full of knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. xi. 9, A.V.).

To attain this, God plans to use Israel as a channel to reach the nations, so first of all He chooses or elects them:

"The Lord did not set His love upon you, *nor choose (elect) you*, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people" (Deut. vii. 7, A.V.).

"The Lord has declared this day that you are His people, His treasured possession as He promised ... He has declared that He will set you in praise, fame, and honour *high above all the nations He has made* and that you will be a people holy to the Lord your God as He promised" (Deut. xxvi. 18, 19, N.I.V.).

"If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all His commands that I give you today, *the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth*" (Deut. xxviii. 1, N.I.V. and see verse 13).

"He (God) has revealed His word to Jacob, His laws and decrees to Israel. He has done this for no other nation; they do not know His laws" (Psa. cxlvii. 19, 20, N.I.V.).

See also Deut. iv. 37; xiv. 2; Psa. cxxxv. 4; Isa. xli. 8; xlv. 4; lxxv. 9, 22.

God's plan in all this was expressed by Paul when he warned the opposing Jews at Pisidian Antioch that he would turn from them to the Gentiles because of their opposition. Yet concerning their Messiah and them he quoted:

"I have made you a light for the Gentiles *that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth*" (Acts xiii. 47, N.I.V.).

But it may be objected that these promises to Israel were conditional. So they were, and if this summed up God's dealings with Israel, there would be no future for them. But through Jeremiah, God revealed His purposes of grace to this undeserving people, by making *a New Covenant with them*. This was to take the place of the Old Covenant of Law given through Moses (Jer. xxxi. 31-37). This is a long passage and the reader should carefully ponder over these verses. God says He will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and Judah. It would not be conditional like the Old Covenant of Law, because God would impress His law (His truth) on their minds and they would get to know Him from the least to the greatest. He would forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more. He makes the challenge and says that if the creation of day and night, earth and heaven, could be made to vanish; then the descendants of Israel would cease for ever to be a nation before Him. Or if the foundations of the earth could be searched out and the heavens above be measured, then, says God, "I will reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done".

The covenant was ratified by the shed blood of Christ:

“In the same way, after the supper He took the cup, saying, This cup is the *new covenant in My blood*, which is poured out for you” (Luke xxii. 20, N.I.V.).

And the reader should carefully note what is written about the New Covenant in the epistle to the Hebrews (chapters ix. and x.).

There can be no doubt there must be a future restoration of Israel, for this rests on the New Covenant of grace and the shed blood of Calvary. Rom. xi. seals all this by the Apostle telling us that all Israel will be finally saved because of this covenant with them (Rom. xi. 25-29) and the fact that God’s gifts and His unconditional promises are irrevocable. They cannot be changed or wiped out. All this cancels the idea held by many that because of their failure, there is no future for the nation of Israel and all their blessings have now been handed over to the church and they are the spiritual Israel. Such teaching is quite unscriptural and therefore wrong. What we must not miss is the fact that Israel were an *elect people* and although they have failed in the past and spiritual blindness has come upon them, this is not for ever, but only “until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in” (xi. 25, 26). At the Lord’s Second Coming, the blindness will be taken away, the nation will be saved and become a channel of blessing to all the earth.

There is another Scriptural fact we must not forget, and that is God never leaves Himself without a witness. In the darkest times of Israel’s apostasy there was always a godly remnant who were faithful. This is what Elijah had to be reminded of (xi. 2-5), and this was true during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles during which Israel, in the mercy of God, was given another opportunity to repent, in which case their sins (including the killing of their Messiah and King) would be forgiven and He would return to them and the kingdom promises, spoken of by all the holy prophets, could then be fulfilled (Acts iii. 17-26); a passage of Scripture of great importance which is usually overlooked. It is noteworthy that election is linked with this remnant, “even so then at this present time also there is a remnant *according to the election of grace*” (Rom. xi. 5).

After the failure of Israel at the end of the Acts, we have the revelation of a new creation, a new Man (Eph. ii. 11-16) consisting of a number taken from Jews and Gentiles. They were *elected by the Father* before the foundation of the world (Eph. i. 4) and are identified with Christ in His death, resurrection and ascension (Eph. ii. 4-6), for they are seen here as enthroned with Christ in the highest glory “far above all”. No wonder they are exhorted to set their hearts on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God and not on earthly things! (Col. iii. 1, 2).

Thus we see that the wide plan of God embracing the highest heavens down to earth is under-girded as it were by God’s elective choice, for He has not only conceived this great plan which embraces the whole universe of a new heaven and a new earth, but He has selected those who take their part in the establishment of this plan and we can be sure that an all-wise God has chosen the right people to do this!

As an earthly example, it is like a person owning a piece of land which he wants to develop. So he plans to do this, and to carry it out he employs others to assist in the work. He chooses (elects) certain firms whom he feels will produce the best work for him, and provided that he does not infringe the law in what he plans, he cannot be criticized. He cannot employ everybody! Yet, when God does something similar to this He is judged to be unfair because He elects some and leaves out others! Not only this, but these critics confine election to salvation and nothing else, whereas we have seen that it goes far wider. Of course it includes salvation, for those whom God has selected have become involved in sin and death and these must be removed, otherwise the divine kingdom plan can never be realized.

This realization awaits the creation of new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (II Pet. iii. 13). These are spotless and perfect with spotless and perfect beings in them and so it is here that the final kingdom of God is realized and God's perfect rule and control will be supreme with nothing to spoil it.

We must not confuse the 1,000 year reign of Christ (the millennium) with this final phase of the kingdom of God for the millennium takes place *in the present heaven and earth* at the return of Christ and can be called the most favoured age since the fall of man. There will be universal peace, but sin and death are still there, so it cannot be the fulfillment of the perfect kingdom.

Ephesians i. looks forward to a time when all in heaven and on earth will be brought under the headship of Christ and then there will be perfect unity. The N.I.V. renders it "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one Head, even Christ" (i. 10). "Gather together in one" of the A.V. is literally "head up again" in Christ. Phil. ii. 5-11 N.I.V. reveals the time when Christ is exalted to the highest place and then when every knee shall bow in heaven, earth, and even under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Jehovah). This will be to the glory of God the Father.

Here the divine plan comes to a glorious conclusion. As Ezekiel was told, God is carefully watching over His plan as it is fulfilled step by step. His sovereignty allows nothing to frustrate it. The eternal reign of God will fulfil to His eternal glory.

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Here the divine plan comes to a glorious conclusion. As Ezekiel was told, God is carefully watching over His plan as it is fulfilled step by step. His sovereignty allows nothing to frustrate it. The eternal reign of God will fulfil to His eternal glory.

Examples.

pp. 225 - 229

“They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts iv. 13).

It is unlikely that we realize the extent to which we influence the lives of others. We move in several circles; if we are in business or employed in some way, we meet with certain people every day and others less frequently. So we have opportunities of influencing people and they may influence us. What we say might influence others, but what we *are* is more likely to exert a strong influence. Indeed our very personality creates an atmosphere, even if our minds are concentrating on the business in hand. Similarly, in our home life, we affect those at home not only by our words but by our actions.

Christians have need of fellowship, so that they are built up and together the group becomes stronger in faith. As we grow in grace, our influence becomes stronger and we witness to our faith, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. In Hebrews we read:

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. x. 23-25).

Some of us do not have the opportunity of assembling with others of like precious faith and it may be that age or health prevents us from meeting together. We should bear in mind the need of fellowship and ask the Lord for guidance. We should be careful as we choose our friends, for our spiritual life may be affected by them. James wrote, “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God” (James iv. 4).

Peter, writing to the dispersion, was anxious that the Jews should exert a good influence on the Gentiles:

“Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (I.Pet.ii.12, R.S.V.).

Although Jesus Christ had told His disciples that He must suffer, be killed and on the third day rise again, when He was betrayed, arrested, crucified and buried, the disciples were bewildered (Matt. xvi. 21). Two disciples walking to Emmaus, described their feelings (Luke xxiv. 19-21), but the risen Christ appeared to the disciples and promised that they would receive “power after the Holy Ghost is come unto you” (Acts i. 8). So, after the day of Pentecost the disciples were no longer weak and dispirited, but were strong and full of the Holy Ghost.

Peter, who previously had denied his Lord, was boldly declaring that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, had risen from the dead and he called on the nation to repent (Acts ii. 38). The

bold witness of Peter and John worried the priests, the authorities of the Temple and of the Sadducees (Acts iv. 1), and they observed that they were “unlearned and ignorant men” (13). They were amazed at their witness but they “took knowledge that they had been with Jesus”. The council had to admit that a wonderful miracle had taken place as the lame man was healed, so they could only threaten Peter and John.

This is a special example of the power which came upon Peter and others as they witnessed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but in a lesser manner we in our turn may be witnesses to our Lord and to the faith.

Peter exclaims, “What manner of persons ought we to be?”. He had been writing about the Day of the Lord, and then we read:

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (II Pet. iii. 11).

Two other Scriptures are worthy of mention. Christ was with His disciples in a boat when He fell asleep. A terrific storm arose and the boat began to sink, for it was overwhelmed by the sea. The disciples woke up the Lord saying, “Lord, save us: we perish”. He rebuked the wind and the sea and there was great calm. The men marveled and said, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!” (Matthew viii. 27). The disciples still regarded Christ as a man and did not at that time realize that He was God, manifest in the flesh.

Paul uses a similar phrase to show with what power the gospel was preached and its effect. His own words speak for themselves:

“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of man we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia” (I Thess. i. 5-7).

The word “ensample” is archaic and we do not use it today. We can replace it by the common word “example”. There are four Greek words, sometimes translated *example* and sometimes *ensample*. One of these Greek words is *tupos*, which is interesting as it is translated in the A.V. as example, ensample, pattern, figure, print, fashion, form and manner. It is recorded that Thomas said of the risen Lord, “Except I shall see in His hands the *print* of the nails ...”, and here “print” is the Greek *tupos* (John xx. 25). Another example of its use is in Titus ii. 7 where Paul exhorts Titus, “In all things shewing thyself a *pattern* of good works”.

Peter gave advice to servants to be subject to their masters, whether good or overbearing. If a servant does wrong, and takes his punishment with patience, can he claim any credit? But if the servant is caused to suffer for doing well, he will have God’s approval if he endures it patiently:

“but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable to God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps” (I Pet. ii. 20, 21).

The Lord Himself is our supreme example. He suffered for our sakes, “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth” (22). Paul described how Christ left His heavenly home and gave His all for us, humbling Himself and becoming obedient unto death (Phil. ii. 5-11). He was an example to His disciples when He washed their feet:

“For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John xiii. 15).

Peter advised the elders to feed the flock, but to keep humble as they did the Lord’s work. They should be an example to others:

“Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (I Pet. v. 3).

The example to which Paul refers in his First Epistle to Timothy is not to his own conduct, but to God’s mercy and grace. He was deeply conscious of the evil he had done in persecuting the church, but God knew he did it through ignorance, and He was merciful. Paul asserted that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, adding, “of whom I am chief” (I Tim. i. 15). He was an example (or pattern, for *hupotuposis* is used) to all sinners who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour:

“Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a *pattern* to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting” (I Tim. i. 16).

But in Paul’s Epistle to the Thessalonians, he does use the Greek word *tupos* in the context of his own conduct being an example for others to follow. He writes about the need to be honest and orderly, and working to provide for daily needs. “If any would not work, neither should he eat”, he wrote (II Thess. iii. 10-12). He explains how he made himself an example to others:

“Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us” (II Thess. iii. 8, 9).

Paul gave similar advice to Timothy, that his conduct might be an example to believers. Again he uses the Greek word *tupos*:

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading ...” (I Tim. iv. 12, 13).

There is one more reference to complete our study of examples or patterns. In Phil.iii., Paul explains how he was pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (iii. 10-15). Should our minds not be fully in line with the will of God, He will reveal even this, Paul declares:

“Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample” (Phil. iii. 16, 17).

Once again Paul uses the Greek *tupos* and we should regard him as our pattern, and run the heavenly race as he did.

In Phil. ii. 12 Paul urges, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”. He encourages them by adding, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure”, and that they should shine as lights in the world. The margin gives the alternative, “shine ye as lights ...”. The whole verse reads:

“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;” (Phil. ii. 15).

In Matt. v. 14-16, in the course of the sermon on the mount, Christ told His disciples that they were the light of the world: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (16). The truth that believers should shine as lights in the world extends to all, and is not restricted to one dispensation. It is “basic truth”.

What manner of persons should we be? What difference does it make if Christ dwells in our hearts by faith? We are like lamps, carrying the light. Surely if we are light bearers, at least a glimmer of that light should show in our personality! If we are conformed to “the image of His Son”, we should in some measure reflect the image of our Lord (Rom. viii. 29). Are we living so close to our Lord and Saviour, and our Head, that those who meet us “take knowledge” that we are Christians?

The First Place.

pp. 155 - 159

“that in all things He might have the pre-eminence” (Col. i. 18).

The above quotation is taken from the A.V. Paul expresses his conviction that in every thing the Lord Jesus Christ should be pre-eminent. If we are able to look up the passage in *The Englishman's Greek New Testament*, with interlinear literal translation, we will find the following:

“And He is the Head of the body, the assembly; Who is (the) beginning, first born from among the dead, that He might be in all things holding the first place; because in Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell” (Col. i. 18, 19).

In *Letters From Prison*, page 129, Stuart Allen gives “the first place” as a suitable translation.

In the context, we have the reasons set out which we will consider later, but first let us remind ourselves of other passages of Scripture which provide a useful background. There are other Scriptures which show that Christ is supreme, and which refer to Him before He appeared on the earth. In John's Gospel we read that the Word was God. All things were made by Him, so He was the Creator. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (John i. 1, 3, 14). Then if we refer to John xvii. 1-5, and read our Lord's wonderful prayer, we observe the prayer commences “Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee ...”.

“And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was” (xvii. 5).

Here we have a glimpse of the glory which the Word had even before the world was made. John i. reveals that all things were made by the Word and without Him was not any thing made that was made. So we have a view of a supreme Creator Who laid aside His glory and came down to this earth for our sakes that we might be redeemed.

Another passage which is important is Phil. ii. 5-11. Here we find Christ's humiliation described in some detail. Christ Jesus, being in the “form of God” (or having the status of God), took upon Him the “form of a servant” and was made in the likeness of men. He humbled Himself even more, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Then we read of His exaltation, and how He will be supreme. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, and ... every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”.

We will now consider the context of Col. i. 18:

“In Whom (Christ) we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible,

whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence” (Col. i. 14-18).

We notice that Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God. Jesus said that no man has seen the Father (John vi. 46). Philip asked the Lord on another occasion, “Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us” (John xiv. 8), and in reply our Lord said that he that had seen the Lord had seen the Father. Another reference is in John i. 18 which reads:

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.”

Although we cannot see the invisible God, we can rejoice that He sent His Son, and as we look on Him, we see the Father. God loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son for our salvation. So we see the love of God in the life and death of His Son, Jesus Christ. But as we read Col. i. 15, “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature”, we find a problem. The meaning of “firstborn” needs some explanation. At first we might think it means that Christ was the first to be created. Some words change their meaning in the course of time, and we therefore follow the example of Stuart Allen by quoting from *The Deity of Christ* by Professor F. F. Bruce and Dr. W. J. Martin:

“The word ‘firstborn’ had long since ceased to be used exclusively in its literal sense, just as ‘prime’ (from the Latin *primus*=first) with us. The Prime Minister is not the first minister we have had, he is the most pre-eminent. A man in his ‘prime’ of life has long since left the first part of his life behind. Similarly, ‘firstborn’ came to denote not priority in time, but pre-eminence in rank” (*Letters From Prison*, page 127, by Stuart Allen).

Thus the conclusion is that firstborn does not refer to time, but indicates the rank or primacy. Christ is not ‘downgraded’ to the level of a created being, but He is entitled to the high rank that should be accorded to the one Who created all things.

This word “firstborn occurs twice: “The firstborn of all creation” (Col. i. 15). “The firstborn from the dead” (18).

In verse 18 we pass from Christ’s rank as first in the material world (first in creation) to His rank as first in the spiritual realm, the new creation. He was the firstfruits of them that slept (I Cor. xv. 20). Thus He was the first in resurrection. In Col. i. 18 we also have the title “the beginning”. We find this in Rev. xxi. 6 (also xxii. 13). He that sat upon the throne said “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end”. These titles confirm the Deity of Christ. He is the Head of the body, the church.

In Col. i. 16 there is another point which should not be overlooked. “All things were created by Him and for Him.” We see His supreme position, for He is not only the Creator, but in the act of creation He had an object or goal, and all things relate to this goal. Then in verse 17, “He is before all things and by Him all things consist”. It is true that He was before all things, but what is written is that He *is* before all things, indicating His status, rather than the timing of events. By Him all things consist or held together.

The Omnipotent One, having an object in view, holds the universe together and is in full control.

Having seen how the Lord Jesus Christ is first in the material and the spiritual orders, having a goal in view and holding all things under His control, it is for us to give Him all the glory and honour due to Him and to give Him the pre-eminence, or first place in our lives. What have we omitted? In all things He might have the pre-eminence. Let us not be content with giving Him the first place in *some* things. He must have the first place in all things.

This brings us to the point where we consider how we can live up to this standard. Do we put our Lord first in our lives? How easy to say or sing certain words, but how hard to maintain them in practice. We sing “All for Jesus” or “Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold”. Yes, we enjoy the tune, but can we put into practice what we sing?

Our prayers may be offered in sincerity, but have we given sufficient thought to the words we pray? In Eph. iii. 14-21 Paul prays “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith”. What demands might be made if this prayer were answered? It is true that he also prays,

“that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man” (Eph. iii. 16).

We certainly need to be strengthened with might by His Spirit if we are to face up to the consequences of the indwelling of Christ.

By way of a simple illustration, it is usual when receiving a friend who will stay in our house for a few days, to say “Make yourself at home”. Suppose this was taken literally, and the friend changed everything in the home to suit his ideas? The furniture might be moved around -- even a room might be redecorated to give effect to a different colour scheme. If Christ dwells in our hearts, what changes would He make? Our thoughts, intentions and plans would be subject to His direction.

But we might be disturbed when we think of our daily needs. When we think of the indwelling of Christ, do we imagine that our thoughts would always be on spiritual matters? Our Lord Jesus Christ certainly said “Ye cannot serve God and Mammon”. He told His disciples not to take anxious thought for the daily needs, and in Matt. vi. 33 He added:

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Paul write a similar word of encouragement:

“But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. iv. 19).

We can be sure that if we give the Lord Jesus Christ the first place in our lives, He will supply all our needs (although this may not cover all the things we would like to have, i.e. our 'wants') and He will guide us in the right way. When we are concerned about choosing the right path, the proverb is always in our minds:

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths” (Prov. iii. 5, 6).

Our Foundation.

“Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. ii. 20).

pp. 172 - 178

Each year in the month of May, we hold special meetings in London on a Saturday which is called “Foundation Day”. The notice announcing the meetings usually contains a brief note, thus:

THE BEREAN FORWARD MOVEMENT

Our basis

- (1) Full inspiration of the Scriptures.
- (2) Right division of the Scriptures.
- (3) Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- (4) All sufficiency of His one sacrifice.

Two Trusts were formed in 1944, The Berean Forward Movement and The Berean Publishing Trust and both Trust Deeds contain the four basic tenets. Charles H. Welch suggested that once a year we should remind ourselves of these basic tenets. We hold Foundation Day so that they will not be forgotten.

In 1943 we were granted the use of Wilson Street Chapel for a trial period of one year, and since then permission has been extended for an indefinite period. The Chapel which was closed at the beginning of the war was reopened in September 1943 and named “The Chapel of the Opened Book”.

In 1909 C. H. Welch became the Editor of *The Berean Expositor* which was produced with the support of Frederick P. Brininger and other friends. The two Trusts were formed to put the work on a more formal footing. Only a few books and booklets had been published but C. H. Welch had written many MSS, which awaited an opportunity of publication. The Berean Publishing Trust took over the MSS and most of these writings were in print by the time Mr. Welch died in 1967.

Some friends feared that the use of Wilson Street Chapel might lead to the formation of a sect or denomination, but C. H. Welch and the Trustees were opposed to any such development. Nevertheless, the witness of the Berean Trusts is distinctive in character in that it emphasizes the dispensational aspect of truth, while adhering to the need to study basic truth, practical truth, as well as prophetic truth.

In the Trust Deed Scripture references are given for each tenet and these are given for the information of our readers:

(1) Full inspiration of the Scriptures.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Tim. iii. 16).

COMMENT. We believe unreservedly in the full inspiration of Scripture. Peter supports Paul in II Pet. i. 21 which reads:

“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

The Greek *phero* here translated “moved” is translated “driven” in Acts xxvii. 17.

(2) Right division of the Scriptures.

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Tim. ii. 15).

The Trust Deed then gives Acts xxviii. 17-31 as the second reference, but as it is a long passage, we quote only Acts xxviii. 28. The reader may refer to the whole passage in view of its importance:

“Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen” (Acts xxviii. 28, N.I.V.).

COMMENT. The reference to “right division” leads us to consideration of dispensational truth. Writing to the Philippians, Paul says:

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ” (Phil. i. 9-10).

In the margin, instead of “approve things that are excellent” there is the alternative rendering “try the things that differ”. In our search for knowledge we have to observe differences. For example, if I say I have an animal with four legs, you do not know whether it is a donkey, or cat, or dog, or cow... unless further information is given which will identify it. The fact is that a donkey has four legs, but everything with four legs is not a donkey. So in our study of the Scriptures, we learn by observing differences. Does Peter’s ministry differ from that of Paul? We quote a short passage:

“But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (for He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:” (Gal. ii. 7-8).

(3) Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. xvi. 16).

“And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the son of the living God” (John vi. 69).

“And Thomas answered and said unto Him, my Lord and my God” (John xx. 28).

COMMENT. We add the following important references:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John i. 1).

“while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus ii. 13, N.I.V.).

“We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him Who is true. And we are in Him Who is true—even in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God, and eternal life” (I John v. 20, N.I.V.).

Stuart Allen has written an excellent and lucid booklet on this subject entitled “*The Lord Jesus Christ, God or only Man*” and this is recommended reading. There are many other references such as Matt. i. 23 and Phil. ii. 5-11.

(4) All sufficiency of His one sacrifice.

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts iv. 12).

“For by one offering, He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. x. 14).

COMMENT. We suggest that the whole passage of Heb. x. 10-14 be read. The all sufficiency of His one sacrifice is a vital tenet because this covers the basis of our salvation. While we recognize our duty to study dispensational truth, we must be clear about the gospel of our salvation. If we are to build up our doctrine, we must start with a sound foundation. Paul’s prison epistles set out the basis in a few words. Eph. i. 6-7 tells us that we are accepted in the Beloved and in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Verse 4 says “...that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love”. The gospel is expressed in simple terms in Eph. ii. 8-10:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Paul speaks of “my gospel”, and we are sure that Paul’s gospel includes salvation through the grace of God. We should take every opportunity of making God’s grace known to others. Paul did this all through his life to the end. He wrote:

“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (I Cor. ix. 16).

In writing to the Galatians he says:

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of men, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. i. 8-12).

In *An Alphabetical Analysis* Part 6, pages 202-207, C. H. Welch has written an article headed "Foundation". He makes the remarkable statement that foundation is a relative term. In searching the Scriptures for its use we find that sometimes it must be taken literally, and in other cases foundation must be regarded as a figure of speech. We find the following examples of its use:

Foundation of the house of the Lord (I Kings vi. 37) (Numerous references).

Foundation of the earth (Psa. lxxxii. 5; Isa. xxiv. 18; xl. 21; xlvi. 13).

Foundation of the hills (Psa. xviii. 7).

Foundation of heaven (II Sam. xxii. 8).

Foundation of the world (II Sam. xxii. 16; Psa. xviii. 15).

The excitement when the foundation of the Temple was finished is recorded in Ezra.iii. Some sang, others shouted for joy, while older people wept as they were overcome by emotion.

C. H. Welch points out that a foundation may be of no value if it does not support a building. So, in various passages there are descriptions of different kinds of building that may be erected.

In Matt. vii. 24-27 Jesus Christ speaks of a wise man who built a house on a rock foundation, while the foolish man built his house on sand. The storm tested the houses and only the house built on rock survived. Christ used the example of the wise man to show that after hearing the words of the Lord, action needs to be taken. The foolish man is one who hears the word, but ignores it. So we may take this to mean that to preach doctrine and so lay a foundation is of little value, if faith and a practical Christian life do not follow the preaching.

Paul also uses the figure of the builder. He describes himself as a wise master builder who laid a good foundation. Others built on that foundation, some using gold, silver, or precious stones while some used wood, hay, or stubble. The buildings were tested by fire. Paul comments on his foundation in I Cor. iii. 11:

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

So Paul affirms that Christ is the only and the true foundation.

This leads us to an important verse which Peter quotes in his first epistle:

"Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious stone, a sure foundation" (Isa. xxviii. 16).

In the context the corner stone appears to be a part of the foundation, but we have a problem. Peter quotes Isa. xxviii. 16 and the Greek for corner stone means a stone "at the extreme angle" (Young's Concordance). The chief corner stone may therefore be the head stone, the keystone, or the topmost stone. Is it correct to view Christ as the true foundation, and at the same time the head stone or keystone? Psa. cxviii. 22 says that

the stone which the builders rejected is become the head stone of the corner. Do we have difficulty in reading that Jesus Christ is the beginning and the ending, the Alpha and Omega? As we view the complete building, Christ is the foundation, and completes the building like the keystone. As the glory of the Lord filled the Temple, so the whole building is filled with the glory of the Lord.

We have said that Peter quotes Isa. xxviii. 16. We will quote what he wrote in his first epistle:

“To Whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious ... the same is made the head of the corner” (I Pet. ii. 4-7).

Peter goes on in verse 9 to remind his readers that they are a chosen nation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation... and here we see that Peter is faithfully dealing with his ministry to the circumcision.

We will observe how Paul writes, for he also writes of a spiritual house. We must save space so we ask the reader to look up Eph. ii. 19-22. The fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God are like a building, based on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. We are living stones in this building and are fitly framed together, growing into a holy temple, and in this temple God Himself will dwell through the Spirit. This temple differs from the one described by Peter, but Jesus Christ is the corner stone of each building.

So in Ephesians we have the figure of the Body of Christ, we being members of His Body, the church, and He being its Head. We also have the figure of a holy temple, we being stones fitted together to make a dwelling place for God Himself.

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (I Cor. iii. 11),

and it is this foundation that is the basis for the gospel of grace, & also for the “new man” (Eph. ii. 15, 16), the Body of Christ of which He is the Head.

Foundation Truth.

No.1. The types of Scripture.

pp. 141 -145

The whole of the Word of God is Truth, but we need to distinguish between Truth that has a temporary significance (e.g. animal sacrifice), and Truth that is eternal. When this is not done, confusion results. There is distinction between dispensational truth and basic or foundation truth. The former may be limited to a certain period and certain people; the latter does not change but remains eternally the same for all God's family. God's remedy for sin and death is not dispensational, but depends on the basic truth of redemption by the One Offering of the Lord Jesus Christ. God has not one way of saving sinner in O.T. times, and a completely different one in the N.T. Nor is the salvation of a Jew any different from that of a Gentile.

It is a good and reassuring thing for us to consider the certain and unchanging foundations upon which our faith rests. God taught His earthly people, the nation of Israel, basic truth by illustration or "types", as the N.T. calls them. I Cor. x. 11 states, "now all these things happened unto them (Israel) for ensamples" and the margin shows that the Greek word translated "ensamples" means "types". Many were the types or pictures of truth in the O.T. and they were prophetic, they looked forward to their fulfillment in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The rich teaching of the Scriptural types is well nigh forgotten today to our great loss. An hundred years ago that great Christian barrister, Sir Robert Anderson, who was a first-rate expositor of the Word of God, lamented the fact that the doctrine of the types was little known in Christian circles. One wonders what he would have thought of the state of things today! In these studies we hope to bring forward truth which he presented so ably.

He wrote of the apostasy which existed at *that* time. The spiritual declension that has set in since then has made this all the more evident. Today the foundations of the Christian faith are being attacked from all quarters. And for the most part this attack does not just come from the unsaved world. Prominent leaders of churches are denying the truth of the virgin birth of Christ and His resurrection. "When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psa. xi. 3, N.I.V.).

The best thing is to keep sounding out the truth of God's Word. This is the only lasting remedy; and a careful consideration of the types of Christ in Scripture will help to this end. The book of Genesis closes by informing us how Israel came to be dwellers in Egypt. As we open the book of Exodus, we find that they had become slaves, oppressed by hard and cruel bondage from the Egyptians.

Their struggles for freedom only made their lot worse. It was impossible for the nation to serve the Lord while they were subject to the taskmasters' whip. The only thing they could do was to cry to the Lord for deliverance and the Lord heard their cry.

At the burning bush, Jehovah revealed Himself to Moses and said to him:

“And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey ...” (Exod. iii. 7, 8, R.V.).

Moses was commanded by God to go to Pharaoh and say to him:

“... Thus saith the Lord, Israel is My Son, My firstborn, and I have said unto thee, let My son go *that he may serve Me*; and thou hast refused to let him go: behold, I will slay thy son, thy firstborn” (Exod. iv. 22, 23).

One of the first lessons we learn from the typical teaching of the Passover is that we have to be *free* in order to serve the Lord acceptably. The epistle to the Romans makes it clear that man by nature is a sinner, and his sin brings him into *bondage*.

“Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him...that so we should no longer be *in bondage to sin*” (Rom. vi. 6, R.V.).

The result of this is *freedom*:

“And being made *free from sin* ye became *servants of righteousness*” (Rom. vi. 18, R.V.).

“But now *being made free from sin*, and become *servants to God*, ye have your fruit unto *sanctification* ...” (Rom. vi. 22, R.V.).

Redemption and salvation mean freedom from the bondage and slavery to sin, so that *one can become a servant of God* and carry out His will in practice.

“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John viii. 36).

Man loves to talk about liberty and one of his cherished aims is to experience it, but little does he realize that unless he comes under the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ, he is a *slave*, and always will remain so. When we are saved by complete faith and trust in Christ, He cancels the slavery and then we are free, not to please ourselves, but *to please Him and render acceptable service and witness* out of gratitude for all He has done for us.

So in Israel's case of old; they had to be delivered from Egyptian slavery and this could only be done by the power of God. But before they could be redeemed by power, they must needs be redeemed by blood. The redemption story is perfect in its details. Being in Egypt they came under Egypt's doom, for the divine decree to Pharaoh was that all the firstborn in the land of Egypt would die. There was no exemption for Israel, but a way of salvation and deliverance was proclaimed. A paschal lamb was to be killed for

every house and its blood sprinkled upon the lintel and side posts of the door. This was a gospel message which Moses brought from God to Israel, “When He seeth the blood upon the lintel and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not suffer the destroyer to come into your houses to smite you” (Exod. xii. 23).

Note well that the blood was *not* sprinkled on the door step, for not even in type will God allow what represents the precious blood of Christ to be trampled under foot. Hebrews x. 29 warns us of those who had “trodden under foot the Son of God” and we live in a day that is ignorant of “the first principles of the oracles of God”, the very ABC of the divine revelation to mankind. Today, sin is regarded merely as a defect, inevitable in the progress of the human race toward perfection which is man’s natural destiny. Sir Robert Anderson wrote nearly a hundred years ago:

“We have come to such a pass that the most elementary truths of Scripture need to be re-stated—man’s utter ruin and hopelessness, consequent upon the spiritual depravity that is his heritage from the Fall; and his need of “redemption by blood”—salvation through the death of Christ” (*For us Men*, pp. 25-27).

Let us consider further the story of Israel’s redemption as typified by the Passover. There was a time when practically everyone knew this, because the Bible was better known and regarded as the Word of God. Not so today, and even those who do regard it as such would probably sum it up by saying that God passed through the land of Egypt in judgment, and when He came to the blood sprinkled door of the Israelite, He passed over it instead of entering in to slay the firstborn.

But what if we should find that this is not what the record teaches? The word “passover” is *pasach* and occurs 3 times in Exod. xii. (13, 23, 27). In I Kings xviii. 21 it occurs in Elijah’s address to Israel, “How long *halt* ye between two opinions?”. They were hesitating to take the decisive step to one side or the other. It is also used of the prophets of Baal who *leaped* up and down about their altar (I Kings xviii. 26). They did not “pass away” from it. The action of a bird fluttering over its nest to protect it illustrates the meaning of *pasach* (Isa. xxxi. 5). The Lord preserves His people from harm and danger. He hides them under the shadow of His wings (Psa. xvii. 8), and it was in this way He preserved the Israelites on that awful night when the destroying angel was abroad in the land of Egypt.

The words were He “will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you” (Exod. xii. 23). The Lord stood on guard at every blood-sprinkled door. He became their Saviour. This is the real meaning of the Passover. No wonder they sang later on “the Lord Jehovah is my strength and song: *He also has become my salvation*” (Exod. xv. 2).

The divine religion of Israel was marked by festivals based on sacrifice, and joy based on atonement for sin. Paul, centuries later, emphasized the same fact when he wrote to the Corinthians, “For our Passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ: wherefore let us keep the festival” (I Cor. v. 7, 8, R.V. margin). This is joy based firmly on eternal

realities which nothing can shake. Sorrow cannot quench it. “Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” is one of the paradoxes of the Christian life (II Cor. vi. 10).

The story of the Passover teaches the great truth that salvation is God’s work altogether. A sinner cannot save himself or anyone else. God alone can be the Saviour of sinners. Passover also teaches that a sinner can only be saved as he is and where he is in his guilt and ruin. If a sinner could not be saved *in his sins*, salvation would be impossible. God alone can take him out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay and set his feet upon a rock and establish his goings, and put a new song in his mouth (Psa.xl.2,3).

Not only was Israel delivered from the slavery of Egypt, but also from its doom. Redemption by blood was followed by redemption by power. They were brought out by “a strong hand and a mighty arm” which symbolized the almighty power of God, and their deliverance was not complete until they stood on the wilderness side of the sea and saw all their enemies dead upon the shore. The slavery was then at an end. Their praise was full and heart-felt. “I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea” (Exod. xv. 1).

But all this does not exhaust the fullness of redemption. Christ not only saves us from the penalty of sin which is bondage and death, but His salvation puts us in the position in which we can approach a thrice holy God. Forgiveness of sins could give neither title nor fitness to draw near to Him. Redemption is more than forgiveness. As we shall see, the Lord Jesus Christ, through the offering of Himself, satisfies the sinner’s need in all its variety and depth.

The Fourth Gospel

A Study of the Gospel according to JOHN

No.7. iii. 14 - 30.
pp. 5 - 10

“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life” (iii. 14, 15).

In order to assist the understanding of Nicodemus, Christ gives him a practical illustration from Israel’s past history. It is recorded in Numb. xxi. The nation was plagued by fiery serpents whose bite was fatal. Moses was instructed by God and made a bronze serpent and placed it on a pole. All who were bitten were cured if they looked at this serpent. The Lord was teaching that just as the metal serpent was raised aloft on a pole and placed where everyone could see it, so He must be lifted up too on the cross. The Greek *hupsos* always refers to the cross (John viii. 28; xii. 32, 34) and includes the Ascension (Acts ii. 33; v. 31), and so the Lord Jesus was not only glorified on the cross but also when He was raised and received back into glory with the Father.

Note the “must” in the phrase “the Son of Man *must* be lifted up”; this is parallel with the insistence that “the Son of Man *must* suffer”. In no case could these two experiences be avoided. It was the “must” of divine purpose, so clearly foretold in the O.T. (Isa. liii.), upon which the whole great work of redemption rests.

It should be obvious too from this context that the Lord Jesus Christ believed in the historical truth of Moses and the brazen serpent. It will not do to say that He accommodated Himself to the ideas of His day. Such language only shows that it is rooted in unbelief. The Lord not only asserted the truthfulness of the O.T. Scriptures, but claimed to be the Truth itself (xiv. 6).

When we come to John iii. 16, we arrive at what is probably the best known verse of the New Testament, and has been instrumental in leading thousands out of spiritual death unto life eternal all through this age. As C. H. Welch says: “It stands so arrestingly supreme in comprehensive scope, simple grandeur, and clear issues” (*Life Through His Name*, p.103). He speaks of the unity of testimony throughout Christendom and says: “We do well to hesitate long and meditate deeply before setting aside such a unity of testimony”.

One of the problems of John’s Gospel is to decide where the words of Christ end and the comments of the Evangelist begin. There is no need to make a problem out of this, for Christ is giving us the truth of the Father, and John is being guided by the Holy Spirit in what he writes, so that we have divine truth in both cases.

Professor F. F. Bruce writes “with verse 15 Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus probably comes to an end (cf. R.S.V.); in verses 16-21 we have the application to the reader of the significance of that conversation”, and with this we agree.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already, because he has not believed in the Name of God’s one and only Son” (iii. 16-18).

Professor Bruce’s further comment on verse 16 is to the point:

“It is not the Evangelist’s intention to gratify our curiosity about Nicodemus’s response to Jesus’ words; readers may draw their own conclusions from Nicodemus’s two further appearances in this Gospel (vii. 50; xix. 39). His intention is rather to set forth in terms of universal applicability the lesson that Nicodemus was taught. If there is one sentence more than another which sums up the message of the Fourth Gospel, it is this. The love of God is limitless; it embraces all mankind. No sacrifice was too great to bring its unmeasured intensity home to men and women; the best that God had to give, He gave—His only Son, His well-beloved. Nor was it for one nation or group that He was given: He was given so that all, without distinction or exception, who repose their faith in Him might be rescued from destruction and blessed with their life that is life indeed” (*The Gospel of John*, pp. 89, 90).

In verse 16 we have possibly the simplest and clearest expression of the gospel of salvation and it is no wonder that more have found the way of eternal life through this verse than through any other Biblical text. Every word should be weighed over so that its clarity and wonder may not be missed. What is the force of the little word “so”? Some may read it as meaning God loved the world *so much* that He gave His only Son, but *hontos* is demonstrative and means God loved the world *like this*, He gave His only Son. God demonstrated His love for mankind, a love that was always constant, and therefore not subject to gradients of intensity, by giving His Son; and what else could He give that was extra to this?

Did not the Saviour Himself say:

“Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John xv. 13).

One may give generously in many ways to show one’s love, but the greatest expression of all is to give one’s life for the person loved, for in doing this, one gives one’s all. It is of the very nature of love to give. Words by themselves, however beautiful, are not sufficient. And the wonder of it all is that the love of God did not wait for our response. Christ died for His enemies:

“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. v. 8).

The apostle John in his first epistle expands what he writes in his Gospel:

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us” (I John iii. 16).

“This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him” (I John iv. 9).

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (I John iv. 10).

To these verses may be added:

“. . . . the Son of God, Who loved me and *gave Himself* for me” (Gal. ii. 20).

“Christ loved the church, and *gave Himself* for it” (Eph. V. 25).

And to crown it all, we read for the believer:

“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, *will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus*” (Romans viii. 38, 39).

What wonderful assurance this gives us if we have placed our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Evangelist continues:

“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but *to save the world through Him*. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the Name of God’s one and only Son” (John iii. 17, 18).

The Authorized Version uses the word “judge” and clearly here it is adverse judgment or condemnation. *Krino* does not necessarily imply condemnation, for it is used in Matthew xix. 28 in the phrase “*judging* the twelve tribes of Israel” and in Rom. xiv. 5 where it is translated “*esteemeth*”. But here in the Gospel it certainly means condemnation, but Christ did not come into the world in order to condemn, but to save it. John ix. 39 appears to contradict this, but in chapter ix. it is the *effect* of His coming in the response or non-response of those who hear Him.

He who rejects Christ passes judgment on himself, not on Christ. He need not wait for the future day of judgment; he is condemned already. The Evangelist now sums this up in terms of light and darkness. One of John’s characteristics is shown in the way he uses contrasting terms, good and evil, love and hatred, life and death, salvation and condemnation, light and darkness, truth and falsehood.

“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God” (iii. 19-21).

Christ Himself is the light. Chapter i. has told us that He came into the world to illuminate each one. But at the same time we are taught that not every one is prepared to come to the light; they prefer darkness, because the light shows up their sins. And if they reject the light of God in Christ, what hope have they? The answer is none, for in turning away from *light*, they turn away from *life*, and this life of God is eternal, not

bounded by time. There is only one alternative, the opposite of living for ever with God and that is perishing, and there is no middle position.

The apostle Paul uses the same figure as John:

“Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of *darkness*, but rather expose them But everything exposed by the *light* becomes visible, for it is *light* that makes everything visible” (Eph. v. 11-13).

The light of God’s truth contained in His Word, the holy Scriptures, is His standard by which everything must be measured. Eternal life is a tremendous gift and is found only in Christ:

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. vi. 23).

To receive the gift of eternal life by faith and trust in Christ is to be saved in the N.T. sense. Charles H. Welch’s summing up will help here:

“To receive the gift of eternal life is to be saved. Salvation includes both life and deliverance from condemnation, the subjects of which will not perish, but, as another passage has it, have ‘passed from death into life’ (John v. 24). Thus, all who are redeemed, whatever their calling, sphere and destiny, can rejoice as they contemplate the love, the gift, and the deliverance revealed in verse 16 (of chapter iii.)”

Verses 25-29 record a dispute between some of the Baptist’s disciples and a Jew about purification. Previous verses (22-24) tell us that the baptizing ministry of the Lord and John the Baptist went on side by side. There was no real rivalry except in people’s minds. However, some of John’s disciples seemed to resent that Christ was attracting more followers than John. They came to him and said, “Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of Jordan—the one you testified about—well, He is baptizing, and everyone is going to Him” (iii. 26). They were evidently jealous of the Lord as a rival of John. They did not approve of the growing crowds with the Lord and the dwindling crowds with John. And so jealousy began to creep in and this, alas, has occurred from time to time in subsequent Christian history.

The Baptist remained true to his testimony about Christ. He answered them:

“You yourselves can testify that I said, I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of Him. The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less” (iii. 28-30).

No.8. iii. 28 - iv. 24.
pp. 25 - 31

To express his joy, the Baptist used the figure of a wedding, in which he was in the place of “the friend of the bridegroom” or as we should say, “the best man”. It is noteworthy that Scripture does not mix its metaphors like men do. John the Apostle is the only N.T. writer that uses the word “bride”; once in his Gospel, and three times in the Revelation (xxi. 2, 9; xxii. 17). The terms “bride” and “wife” when used figuratively are always connected with Israel. Israel, as the chosen nation, were the wife of Jehovah, when they entered into covenant relationship with God at Sinai. God refers to the time when He:

“took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, *although I was an husband unto them*, saith the Lord” (Jer. xxxi. 32).

Israel was charged by God for her unfaithfulness, yet He pleads with her to come back and be restored (Jer. iii. 1, 20-22). This restoration is the theme of Isaiah’s prophecies (Isa. lxii. 4). Charles H. Welch points out that the restoration of a divorced woman and the betrothal and marriage of “the chaste virgin” spoken of by Paul in II Cor. xi. 2, which John speaks of as the “bride”, must not be confused. Israel, the restored nation, is the restored wife, but a faithful remnant of Israel with some believing Gentile constitute the bride of the Lamb. There is also another company who are *invited* to the marriage of the Lamb. They represent guests and cannot be the Bride. They also are primarily taken from Israel (Matt. xxii. 3) but they rejected God’s invitation, so the invitation was widened by Him (verse 10) to include Gentiles (from the illustration used). In the Acts period the company was enlarged because the door was opened to the Gentiles to join with saved Jews, and then there was the possibility of becoming a partaker of the heavenly calling connected with the New Jerusalem, seen as the Bride of the Lamb (Revelation xix. 9; xxi. 1-3).

The heavenly city finally comes down to the new earth (Rev. xxi. 2, 10, 23, 24). This company represents the election of grace of Rom. xi. 5. It is not possible to go into more detail as such a discussion is getting away from our context in John’s Gospel. We should not be dismayed as we read of the greatness of God’s kingdom purposes, but nothing can be gained by ignoring divine distinctions and confusing the various strands of the great plan of the ages. Those who have Charles H. Welch’s book *Life Through His Name* are directed to pages 120-124 where this is dealt with from the Scriptures in more detail.

Just as in verses 16-21 we have the comments of the Evangelist on the words of Christ, so here in verses 31-36 John meditates on the words of the Baptist. The Word Who “comes from above” and is “above all” must grow greater, while all others must grow less (verses 30, 31) and to Him was given the Holy Spirit without measure. Other messengers from God had received the measure of the Spirit that was necessary each one

for his work, but there was no limit of the Spirit for the Son of God. This is taken further by declaring:

“The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in His hands” (iii. 35, N.I.V.).

We are told twice in this Gospel that the Father loves the Son, here and in v. 20, and this love is beyond our comprehension. Not only this, but He has placed everything in the Son’s hands (verse 35). This the Lord claimed in Matt. xi. 27 and Luke x. 22, “*all things* have been delivered to Me by My Father”. There is therefore no limit to the Son’s possession.

Verse 36 sums everything up:

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”

It is clear that life is one of John’s key words, for he uses this word *zoe* 34 times, alternating “life” with “eternal life”:

A | LIFE (i. 4).
B | ETERNAL LIFE (iii. 15, 16, 36).
A | LIFE (iii. 36).
B | ETERNAL LIFE (iv. 14, 36; v. 24).
A | LIFE (v. 24, 26, 39).
B | ETERNAL LIFE (v. 39).
A | LIFE (v. 40).
B | ETERNAL LIFE (vi. 27).
A | LIFE (vi. 33, 35).
B | ETERNAL LIFE (vi. 40, 47).
A | LIFE (vi. 48, 51, 53).
B | ETERNAL LIFE (vi. 54).
A | LIFE (vi. 63).
B | ETERNAL LIFE (vi. 68).
A | LIFE (viii. 12; x. 10).
B | ETERNAL LIFE (x. 28).
A | LIFE (xi. 25).
B | ETERNAL LIFE (xii. 25, 50).
A | LIFE (xiv. 6).
B | ETERNAL LIFE (xvii. 2, 3).
A | LIFE (xx. 31).

A consideration of all these passages will surely show that not once does John use “life” as pertaining to this present life. The life of which the Evangelist speaks is eternal and resident only in Christ (John xiv. 6; I John v. 11) and *is experienced only by the regenerate*. This is the eternal life that the unsaved will not see or enjoy (John iii. 36). The Word of God makes it perfectly clear that there can be a resurrection to the present natural life (the resurrection of Lazarus and those who were raised from the dead after the resurrection of Christ, and also those mentioned in Heb. xi. 35). But resurrection to the

life of John's Gospel is to unending life, eternal life, and there is no Scripture that teaches this will ever be experienced by those who reject the Son of God. Yet the One Who called Himself the Truth (John xiv. 6) declared that *all that are in the graves* shall hear His voice and this must be universal or words are useless for revelation. But this resurrection affects two classes, one to eternal life and the other to condemnation. The latter cannot possibly refer to the unsaved because Christ states plainly that the saved person has eternal life and "*shall not come into condemnation* but is passed from death unto life" (v. 24). In this, as in all things, the only safe thing to do is to believe all that God reveals in His Word. We shall then be saved from error and disappointment.

Chapter iv.

The chapter commences with Christ withdrawing from Judaea and returning to Galilee. This was possibly in order to avoid a cleavage over the baptism of John and His own, carried out by the disciples, which we have been considering, and also to avoid bringing the coming conflict with the Pharisees to an issue yet. Thus He mainly avoids Jerusalem and Judaea till the end. The authors of the Synoptic Gospels give us no details of this early work in Perea (John i. 19-51), Galilee, or Judaea (ii. 13- iv. 2). The apostle John supplements their records purposely:

“Now He had to go through Samaria. So He came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as He was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour” (iv. 4-6, N.I.V.).

Samaria lay between Judaea and Galilee and the direct route to Galilee was through Samaria, unless one was prepared to make a detour through Transjordan. In coming south from Galilee travelers usually crossed the Jordan and came down through Perea to avoid the hostility of the Samaritans to people who passed through their land to go to Jerusalem for the Feasts. The Lord Jesus once experienced this bitterness on going to the Feast of Tabernacles (Luke ix. 51-56).

At the disruption of Israel's kingdom after the death of Solomon, the ten tribes made their capital city, Samaria, and built a rival Temple on Mount Gerizim. This made a deep split between north and south which explains the statement, “Jews have no dealings with Samaritans”, especially as a Jew would run the risk of incurring ceremonial defilement by having dealings with Samaria and its inhabitants.

It was about midday, if reckoned by sunrise, and Christ, feeling tired out by His long walk, sat down on the well-side and feeling thirsty as well, asked a woman who had come to draw water if she would give Him a drink (iv. 7). The request amazed the woman, for He would have to drink from her vessel, having none of His own, and this would have risked ceremonial pollution, apart from the fact that no Jew would have bothered to speak to a woman, and a Samaritan at that.

How wonderful to realize that here was the “Word Who became flesh” and this episode shows His genuine humanity “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Hebrews iv. 15).

“Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God and Who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water’.” (iv. 10).

Water was always precious in Palestine, but the Lord Jesus wanted to interest her in a gift from God that transcended any earthly spring. Water had already figured in a spiritual sense with Nicodemus (John iii. 5), and here it is used again to denote the gift of the Spirit that lasts eternally. In the O.T. the God of Israel describes Himself as “the fountain of living waters” (Jer. ii. 13), describing His satisfying grace and goodness which they were forsaking for the earthly cisterns they had made themselves, which could never satisfy.

Like Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman failed to understand the words of the Lord. She evidently thought that Christ meant specially pure water. She could not imagine that any water could be of better quality than that from Jacob’s well. This well still exists today and is over 100 feet deep. The woman was puzzled by the fact that the Lord seemed to imply He was greater than her forefather Jacob.

“Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life’.” (iv. 13, 14).

The woman’s curiosity was aroused concerning this peculiar kind of water. She evidently missed the last three words of the Lord “unto life eternal” for she was still thinking in terms of earthly water and the fact that this new kind of water would save her keep coming to this well. But the Lord abruptly changes the subject in order to lead on to a deeper unfolding of the heavenly truth already hinted at:

“ ‘Go, call your husband and come back’. ‘I have no husband’, she replied. Jesus said to her, ‘you are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true’.” (iv. 16-18).

The woman was taken aback with this sudden change of subject, and all the more so as this stranger touched on an intimate phase of her life that she did not want to discuss. However, she was honest enough to admit that the Lord’s words about her were correct and not only this, but she was convinced that the stranger was no ordinary man. He must be a prophet. And the conversation, having now taken a religious turn, she ventures on one great point of difference between Samaritans and Jews, the correct place of worship. Deut. xii. 5 emphasized the place of worship must be that of God’s choice, but where had He chosen to dwell and be worshipped?

“ ‘Sir’, the woman said, ‘I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain (Gerizim), but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem’.” (iv. 19, 20).

Christ's reply to this was quite different from what she expected. Doubtless she thought there would be an argument over the rival claims of Jerusalem and the foot of Mount Gerizim. Abraham and Jacob set up altars at Shechem, near Gerizim (Gen. xii. 7; xxxiii. 20). On Gerizim the blessings were proclaimed recorded in Deut. xxviii. In the Samaritan Pentateuch there is a record of an altar set up on Gerizim and in this vicinity the Samaritan temple stood.

But Christ said to her:

“Believe Me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit and His worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth” (iv. 21-24).

The new order of the kingdom of God was being proclaimed and this, when believed, would extend over the world, far beyond Palestine. While Jerusalem would be the greatest city in this kingdom, it could never be the *only place of worship*. The important question was not now *where* people worship God, but *how* they worship Him.

Saviour, where'er Thy people meet,
There they behold Thy mercy seat;
Where'er they seek Thee, Thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground. (William Cowper).

**No.9. iv. 25 - v. 15.
pp. 45 - 50**

One thing which is quite amazing is that the Lord Jesus gives a lesson on true worship to an outsider, whereas to Nicodemus, a well known leader and teacher of Israel, he deals with the fundamentals of the new birth! But the Saviour makes no mistakes. He reveals to the Samaritan woman that God himself is pure Spirit and can only accept *spiritual* worship, worship that is humble, grateful, and adoring. This is a divine “must” (iv. 24). Such worship is primarily not from the senses, but deeper from the mind that has been touched by God's saving grace. Material things can only be at best the *vehicle* of true spiritual worship; of themselves they are not its essence. And we should never forget the tremendous statement that the Father is seeking such to worship Him (verse 23). As He seeks the world over with all its religion, how many true worshippers does He find? This should be a real challenge to everyone who claims to be a Christian.

The Lord's words were working deeply in the mind of the woman. While the Samaritans' expectation was not connected with the Messiah of Israel, it did look forward to the coming of the great Prophet as foretold by Moses in Deut. xviii. 15. Could this stranger be more than an ordinary prophet? Could He be this great Spokesman?

The disciples who had gone to the city to buy food, now returned and were greatly surprised that He was talking with a woman. But they did not question Him, for they knew He always had good reason for what He did.

The woman had heard that the Jews expected a Messiah, so she said to the Lord,

“I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us” (iv. 25, N.I.V.).

Then, with wonderful simplicity and yet with power Christ’s reply was:

“I Who speak to you am He” (iv. 26).

What a revelation! We are not told what she said, but her following actions showed the tremendous impression this had made on her, for she left her water-pot and returned to the city and told them, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?”. Being impressed by her story, they decided to see for themselves.

“Meanwhile His disciples urged Him, ‘Rabbi, eat something’. But He said to them, ‘I have food to eat that you know nothing about’.” (iv. 31, 32).

This made the disciples think that someone had given Him a meal (33). Like the woman, they misunderstood the Lord’s words, taking them in a material sense. But He replied:

“My food is to do the will of Him Who sent Me and to finish His work.”

He likens this witness to the sowing of seed ending with a harvest. He had already sown the seed of truth in the woman’s mind and already a harvest was in view for enquiring people were approaching from Sychar. The result was that “many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I ever did’. So when the Samaritans came to Him, they urged Him to stay with them, and He stay two days. And because of His words, many more became believers” (39-41). They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this Man really is the *Saviour of the world*” (42). This was a harvest indeed and John is inspired by the Holy Spirit to record these words of the Samaritans because they accord with the wider purpose of his Gospel, bearing in mind that God sent His Son into the world “in order that the world might be saved through Him” (John iii. 17).

On the surface there is a discrepancy in the Gospel records, for the Lord, when commissioning the Twelve Apostles, forbade them to go to Samaria with their message. “Go not” (Matt. x. 5) and “He must needs go through Samaria” (John iv. 4) appear contradictory, but we must always recognize the sovereignty of the Lord in His actions and also, as pointed out before, that though the Jew comes first, the earthly kingdom purposes of God involve the whole world of mankind and can in no way be restricted to Israel. Yet, God had determined Israel should be “first” and be the earthly channel through which a knowledge of Himself as Redeemer and King should be spread to all

mankind, so that “the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea”. Charles H. Welch’s comment is helpful:

“John the Baptist not only said ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’ (Matthew iii. 2), but ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John i. 29). The former utterance was made known by Matthew, who did not include the latter, whereas John ignores the former and include the latter. It is therefore suggestive of the non-Jewish trend of the Gospel of John that he is inspired to record the ministry of the Lord in Samaria. Moreover, it is in entire accord with the confessed purpose of John in writing this record, which was: ‘That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have *life through His name*’ (John xx. 31)” (*Life through His Name*, p.127).

After two days, the Lord left Samaria for Galilee, which was his main object.

The Healing of the Nobleman’s son.

The evangelist tells us that Christ Himself bore testimony that a prophet has no honour in His own home (44). This proverb is quoted by all three Synoptists (Matthew xiii. 57; Mark vi. 4; Luke iv. 24) with reference to His home town of Nazareth (Mark vi. 6). Here His home district was not Nazareth but Judaea and more particularly Jerusalem where He received the same treatment of indifference and rejection (John xii. 37). But with Galilee it was different. They welcomed Him (iv. 45), and as chapter ii. informs us, news of His wonderful “signs” had been spread throughout Galilee by those returning from the recent Passover.

Having reached Cana where the water was made wine, He was met by a nobleman whose son was desperately ill. The father was evidently one of the staff of Herod the tetrarch of Galilee.

“When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judaea, he went to Him and begged Him to come and heal his son, who was close to death” (iv. 47).

The Lord seemed to be unsympathetic by saying “unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe”. Yet, speaking generally, this was true. He may have said this to stimulate the faith of the nobleman and the Lord could see that this had happened, for He said to him, “you may go; your son will live” (50). The verse goes on to say “the man took Jesus at His word and departed”. So this was real faith. If only all of us could always take the Lord Jesus at His word, what difficulties we should avoid! Before he reached home, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. Having asked the time when his son got better, they told him it was at the seventh hour, and then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Christ had said to him “your son will live”. The joyous result was that both he and his household believed and put their trust in the Lord. “This”, said the Evangelist, “was the second miraculous sign which Christ performed” (49-54).

Chapter v.

The central chapters of the Gospel are related to the various festivals of the Jewish year: Passover (vi. 4), Tabernacles (vii. 2), Dedication (x. 22) and Passover again (xi. 55). But the feast mentioned in v. 1 is not identified, and there have been many guesses. Passover (Irenaeus, Luther, Lightfoot), Pentecost (Chrysostom), Purim (Kepler), others suggest Trumpets, but surely it is wiser to leave the matter as John records it:

“Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews” (v. 1).

At the sheep gate there was a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda (place of outpouring). There were five colonnades in which lay a crowd of infirm people. Professor F. F. Bruce comments here “Jerusalem may have been in ruins for several years when this gospel was written, but the Evangelist envisages it as it was when he knew it and describes its natural features in the present tense”. No wise person will therefore build doctrine on the tense of the verb here, for to do so would be building on a shaky foundation. The belief at this time was that an angel of the Lord came down to the pool and disturbed the water. The person who stepped in first after this was healed.

There was a man there who had suffered for 38 years, possibly with paralysis, since he was unable to get into the water unaided (v. 2-4). The Lord Jesus saw him and learned that he had been a sufferer for a long period. He asked him, “Do you want to get well?” The man explained that he had no one to help him get into the pool. Someone else always got in first.

“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk’. At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, ‘It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat’.” (v. 8-10).

This was the first of the violations of the Jewish Sabbath rules that led to so much bitterness and opposition from the religious leaders (cf. ix. 14, 16). There are 13 occurrences of the word “sabbath” in this Gospel and 13 references to Moses. The Sabbath, with all the added legalism of the Rabbis added to it, occupied a dominant place in the life and heart of every orthodox Jew. Dean Farrar writes:

“It had become the most distinctive and the most passionately revered of all ordinances which separated the Jew from the Gentiles as a peculiar people. It was at once the sign of their exclusive privileges, and the centre of their barren formalism. Their traditions, their patriotism, even their obstinacy, were all enlisted in its scrupulous maintenance their devotion to it was only deepened by the universal ridicule, inconvenience and loss which it entailed upon them in the heathen world.”

The Rabbis had added scores of commands to the Scriptural teaching, and these commands formed a heavy weight on the people. There were 39 “primitive” kinds of work (including ploughing, sowing, and reaping) which, if done presumptuously on the Sabbath, rendered a man liable to death. “Derivative” work was, for example, “digging”, for that was a kind of ploughing; and “plucking” ears of corn, for that was a kind of reaping. We remember the upset caused by the disciples plucking corn on the sabbath

day, even though they were hungry. Christ had to remind the legalists of the example of David and the priests (Matt. xii. 3-5), and also the fact that the Sabbath was made for man as a refreshing rest, not man for the Sabbath (Mark ii. 27). Under the yoke of the Pharisees the day, instead of being a blessing, became a terrible burden.

The man who had been healed defended himself against the charge of sabbath breaking, by the plea that he was acting under another's command.

“Later Jesus found him at the Temple and said to him, ‘See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you’. The man went away and told the Jews it was Jesus Who had made him well” (v. 14, 15).

Christ did not take the attitude that all illness and physical suffering were caused by sin (cf. the blind man in John ix. 2), but in this case He knew what was the cause of his infirmity and warned him about it.

From this time onwards the religious leaders launched a campaign against the Lord which grew in intensity as they planned His death, which came to pass about 18 months later.

At this point, three signs had been given by the Lord Jesus in witness. The first sign made up a deficiency, and ministered to the people's joy. The second ministered life, “thy son liveth”; the third sign ministered health. Each miraculous sign reflects some phase of the Lord's fullness and contributed its evidence to the fact that this was indeed the Christ, the Son of God, the King of Israel.

**No.10. v. 16 - 47.
pp. 61 - 65**

The reply of the Lord Jesus to the Pharisees who criticized Him for healing on the sabbath day, which they regarded as “work”, was:

“So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted Him. Jesus said to them, ‘My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am working’.” (v. 16, 17, N.I.V.).

The activity of God over the creation was continuous. It was impossible for Him to have a day off every week. The sabbath was made for man, not the reverse, so that he could experience rest and refreshment spiritually and physically. Christ does not hesitate to stress His unity with the Father, and justifies His action on the ground that He was following His Father's example. But worse than this, from the Pharisees' standpoint, was His reference to God as His Father which He was claiming in an exceptional sense, thus making Himself equal with God.

“For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill Him; not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God” (v. 18).

John repeats the clause “they sought to kill Him” in vii. 1, 19, 25; viii. 37, 40, so this was not just a temporary upset, but a cold-blooded plotting to murder Him.

“Jesus gave them this answer: ‘I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does, the Son also does.’” (v. 19).

Those who deny the deity of Christ love to pick this verse out because they imagine it proves their point, but it does nothing of the kind. Verses 19-47 substantiate Christ’s claim of complete unity and equality with the Father when they are taken as a whole.

The Lord Jesus had become incarnate to perform the redemptive purpose of the Father. This meant a voluntary submission in every detail to the Father’s will, thus, He avoided doing or saying anything on His own initiative. The Father initiated, and the Son carried this out fully and faithfully. Hence the words, “the Son can do nothing on His own initiative”. He only does what He sees the Father doing. In the following verses this relates to two things, the impartation of life and the execution of judgment, and in dealing with these the Lord showed His equality with the Father. Whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. Neither is there any limit to what the Father shows the Son, for the Father shows Him *all things*, “all He does” (20). Here is equality indeed, and this is reinforced in the verses that follow:

“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life *to whom He is pleased to give it.*”

Here is equality again and not only so but:

“. . . . the Father judges no-one, but has entrusted *all* judgment to the Son, that *all* may honour the Son *just as they honour the Father*. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father Who sent Him” (v. 21-23).

The One Who will judge all men has been man Himself! The Lord’s enemies denied His equality with the Father (and they still do) but real faith relies *solely on what God had said* and accepts it, even though this goes beyond one’s powers of apprehension and understanding. If we honour the Son just as we honour the Father, we shall certainly avoid belittling Him because of His self-dedication and self-restriction to all the Father willed. If we do not, then Christ asserts we neither honour the Father, nor the Son, and are in a sorry state indeed.

The Lord Jesus continues:

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him Who sent Me hast eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (v. 24).

The word of Christ is a life-giving word which is applied by the Holy Spirit to the believing one. He then “hears” in a way that he did not experience before. Later on the

Lord likens His people to sheep, and “hearing” is a characteristic of His sheep—see x. 3, 8, 16, 27 “My sheep hear My voice”—and the result is “they believe on Him that sent Me” (v. 24). In this Gospel Christ is pre-eminently the Sent One to carry out the Father’s purpose. There are 28 occurrences of *pempo* and 17 of *apostello* (45 in all) that speak of Christ being sent. He is THE APOSTLE of Heb. iii. 1 and the Father’s purpose is declared in I John iv. 14:

“The Father *sent* the Son to be *The Saviour of the world.*”

Hearing the voice of the Son of God affects two classes, those who are spiritually dead and those who are physically dead:

“I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself. And He has given Him authority to judge because He is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to life, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (v. 25-29).

Resurrection from physical death is mentioned in verse 28 and refers to the future. But the dead of verse 28 dealt with those who were listening at that time to the Lord’s words. “And now is” (A.V.) or “has now come” (N.I.V.) of verse 25 prove this. They are the “spiritually dead”, “dead in trespasses in sins” (Eph. ii. 1; v. 14). The quickening voice of the Son of God brings them to spiritual life. Eph. ii. 10 tells us what follows. Such are “created in Christ Jesus *unto good works* which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (see also Titus iii. 8). Hence those “who have done good” of John v. 29, produce those “good works” which are the fruit of the spiritual life in Christ. As this resurrection deals with all mankind, “for all that are in the graves” can only refer to the place of physical death which is the lot of all mankind, because all are sinners under condemnation and death (Rom. iii. 19).

For the believer, salvation means being transferred by grace out of the kingdom of Satan, death and condemnation, into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col. i. 13), where condemnation is unknown, for Christ has atoned for all his sins, and eternal life now reigns. We are dealing with basic truth here, not dispensational, and are not surprised to find that the apostle Paul stresses the same truth in Rom. viii. 1, for to be “in Christ Jesus” means no condemnation *now*. The rest of the verse does not have sufficient MSS backing but is found in verse 4 where it accompanies the *walk* of the believer *after salvation*. Condemnation is a legal term as used in Romans, and God does not put any believer “into the dock” a second time. A believer may sow to the flesh and reap corruption by so doing, but that is another matter.

The resurrection to life in John v. 28, is to *eternal life*, and this is only for the believer in Christ, as he is granted immortality found only in the Lord.

The Lord Jesus now deals with witness. He said:

“If I testify about Myself, My testimony is not valid. There is another Who testifies in My favour, and I know that His testimony about Me is valid” (v. 31, 32).

As Professor F. F. Bruce says, “a testimonial to oneself is no testimonial. No one can witness his own signature”. “Self-praise is no recommendation” says the adage, and this is true. In God’s law the testimony of a witness was not received in his own case (Deut.xix.15). The Lord’s opponents accused Him of exalting Himself (John viii. 13), but He could answer, “even if I do bear testimony of Myself, My testimony is true”, for it was confirmed by the Father’s testimony (John viii. 14, 18). In addition to this He had the witness of the Baptist (v. 33), the witness of the Scriptures (v. 39), and the witness of Moses in particular (v. 45), so His witness was amply confirmed by others who were utterly reliable.

As Christ referred to the faithful witness of John the Baptist, He described him as a lamp that gave light (v. 35). The Baptist was not the light. Only the Lord Himself was that light, but John was like a lamp whose wick is fed with oil and this shone in the darkness. Every believer is called to be a light-bearer in a world of darkness and unbelief. No child of God is excused for not letting the light of testimony to Christ and the Truth shine out.

The Lord now refers to the testimony of the Father which eclipsed the witness of the Baptist, for it was the Father Who had given the Son the mighty works or signs to accomplish, and these testified to the fact that He was the Sent One of God (Acts ii. 22). The religious leaders had never seen the Father nor heard His voice and Christ asserted that they had not His Word remaining in them, and this was proved from the fact that they did not believe the One Whom the Father had sent (John v. 37, 38).

This was so, notwithstanding that they considered themselves the guardians of the holy Scriptures, all of which pointed to Him Who was their Saviour and Messiah. The Lord Jesus had to tell them:

“You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life” (v. 39, 40).

The word “study” (search A.V.) can be either present active indicative or present active imperative. Either make sense here, but the reason given “because you think by them you possess eternal life” supports the indicative rather than the imperative, although, read as a command, it is certainly good advice.

The tragedy was that the religious leaders searched the Scriptures (the Old Testament), the Word of God, but missed the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures are able to make the readers wise as regards salvation, but this salvation comes only “through faith in Christ Jesus” (II Tim. iii. 15).

“I do not accept praise from men, but I know you, I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts” (John v. 41, 42).

Christ did not expect mere honour and praise from men. His great motive was to proclaim the glory and fellowship of the Father. Those who wish to be faithful witnesses to the Saviour, likewise must not expect pats on the back from men. The apostle Paul certainly did not (I Thess. ii. 6). "The love of God" is better seen as an objective genitive, "Your love toward God". These leaders did not really love God and hence they did not love Christ.

"I have come in My Father's Name, and you do not accept Me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him" (v. 43).

Seven times in this Gospel the Lord speaks of the Name of the Father (v. 43; x. 25; xii. 28; xvii. 6, 11, 12, 26), but they still rejected Him Who made the Father known. Yet they would readily follow others who claimed to be messiahs. History records several of these between 30-70A.D., and Christ has foretold this will again happen at the end of this age to aid the devil's deception (Mark xiii. 6, 22).

"But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?" (v. 45-47).

In God's law court there was no need for Christ to be their prosecutor, or chief witness against them. There was one already, one whom they venerated, namely Moses. Their rejection of Christ showed that, despite their pretensions, they did not believe Moses either, *for Moses wrote of Him*. The leaders did not accept this, like many present day teachers who do not. But see Deut. xviii. 18 which is quoted by Peter (Acts iii. 22) as a prophecy of Christ, and also by Stephen in Acts vii. 37. Note also John iii. 14 about the brazen serpent and viii. 56 about Abraham foreseeing Christ's day. The Lord Jesus clearly states the fact that Moses wrote portions of the O.T. (and see also Luke xxiv. 27, 44 for the same idea). There was no answer from the rabbis to this conclusion of the Lord. Nor is there any effective one from the religious critics of today.

**No.11. vi. 1 - 35.
pp. 81 - 85**

The Feeding of the 5,000, and the Walking on the Water.

"Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed Him because they saw the miraculous signs He had performed on the sick" (vi. 1, 2, N.I.V.).

The lake is called Gennesaret in Luke v. 1, and the Sea of Tiberias in John xxi. 1. This was because Herod Antipas in 22A.D. built Tiberias to the west of the Sea of Galilee and made it his capital. Luke ix. 10 explains that it was eastern Bethsaida to which Christ took His disciples, not the western Bethsaida of Mark vi. 45 in Galilee. He went up on the high ground and sat with His disciples. The place is well known today as the

Golan heights, which overlook the plain east of the river and the lake. The feeding of this large crowd is related in all the four Gospels, and to get the whole picture the four accounts should be studied.

To test Philip, the Lord asked him how the multitude could be fed (vi. 5, 6) and he replied,

“Eight months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”

The Greek reads “two hundred denarii” and a denarius was the day’s wage for a casual labourer (Matt. xx. 2), and this would probably buy a day’s supply of bread for an average family. To reckon this in English money today is practically impossible, for owing to inflation the modern equivalent soon goes out of date.

Andrew draws attention to the fact that a boy had brought his lunch with him consisting of five small flat barley loaves, or cakes, and two small fish, probably salted. Such a tiny meal was hardly worth mentioning, for it was absolutely inadequate to feed so many hungry people.

The Lord Jesus was in no way disconcerted. He said, “Make the people sit down”; there were about 5,000 of them (John vi. 10, 11). John’s parenthesis here tells us that there was much grass in the place, and Mark, in his account, notes that they sat down on *green* grass. It was spring time and the grass would not yet be burnt brown by the summer heat. Both these statements are words of an eyewitness. “The people” (*anthropoi*) included men and women, but John adds that the men (*andres*) sat down. Matthew emphasizes this by using the phrase “apart from women and children” (xiv.21). Mark tells us that, according to the Lord’s instructions, the large number was arranged in groups of fifty and a hundred. This made the distribution of the food easier.

Then the Lord performed His creative miracle and multiplied the small cakes and fish so that there was not only enough for all to eat and have plenty, but twelve basketsful of food were left over when all were satisfied. There was abundance of food, but no waste. This should be a lesson to all of us today when there are so many grievous famines all over the world. There are spiritual lessons too. The Lord is not impoverished with all His generous giving. As the hymn writer says, “for His grace and power are such, none can ever ask too much” and when we give in like manner, Prob. xi. 24 comes true, “one man gives freely, yet grows all the richer”.

This miraculous sign made a great impression on the crowd and they began to say, “surely this is the Prophet Who is to come into the world” (Deut. xviii. 15-19). They thought that this could be a second Moses who would deliver them from Rome’s oppression as Moses had done for their ancestors in delivering them from the bondage of Egypt. Hence the next verse:

“Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make Him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by Himself” (John vi. 15).

On the surface this looked as though it might be the fulfillment of the purpose for which He had come to this earth; to be king of Israel and bring in His kingdom. But no, this was not the Father's way. It was the easy way that cut out the cross and all it meant and was a recurrence of one of His wilderness temptations. The question of sin and death must be dealt with, for without this there could be no lasting kingdom of heaven upon this earth.

The people were now afire with political zeal and if Christ would not take the initiative, they would try to force Him to do so. So He goes into solitude on the nearby Golan hills and withdraws from them.

The time had now arrived for the fifth miraculous sign to be performed by the Lord Jesus. While Christ was above on the hills, the disciples attempted to reach Capernaum by boat. However, being overtaken by darkness and rising sea, after rowing about twenty to thirty furlongs, they became afraid, for they could see someone walking on the sea and coming towards the ship. They themselves were struggling with a contrary wind and had rowed about three miles. Some commentaries suggest that the ship was near the shore and that Christ was walking *by* the sea. This cannot be true for the ship was in the *midst of the sea* (Matt. xiv. 24; Mark vi. 47) and the Lord was coming towards them. In any case there would have been no need of fear if He was walking *by* the sea. The fact of His walking *on* the sea caused the problem, for they thought it must be an apparition and they were terrified.

The Lord Jesus spoke and quietened them:

“But He said to them, ‘It is I; don't be afraid’. Then they were willing to take Him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading” (John vi. 20, 21).

John omits the account of Peter walking on the water (Matt. xiv. 28-31). As the disciples thought about it afterwards one wonders if their minds went back to two O.T. scriptures:

“(God) which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and *treadeth upon the waves of the sea*” (Job ix. 8).

“O Lord God of hosts, Who is a strong Lord like unto Thee? *Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof rise, Thou stillest them*” (Psa. xxviii. 8, 9, A.V.).

Both these verses stress Deity.

John vi. 22-24 are an explanation of the action of the crowd. They were determined to find Him. Doubtless their ambition to make Him the leader and the fine meal they had enjoyed were still fresh in their minds. Other boats from Tiberias had arrived, and deciding that He was not in the vicinity, they crossed to the west side to look for Him. When they reached Capernaum, they found Him there. They were puzzled as to how He had got there, but the Lord did not gratify their curiosity. Instead He said to them:

“I tell you the truth, you are looking for Me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On Him God the Father has placed His seal of approval” (vi. 26, 27, N.I.V.).

They had been largely taken up with physical satisfaction, but these miraculous signs were not just displays of power for satisfying physical needs. They were illustrations of much deeper teaching. This used to be called the doctrine of the types, and numbers of helpful books were written on the subject. They have all but vanished today. In the discourse that follows, the Lord Jesus shows the importance of the spiritual values lying behind the signs. He had already shown the contrast between natural and spiritual water in His conversation with the woman at the well. Now He compares natural food which was perishable with spiritual food which had eternal values, and this food He was ready to give them if they would only believe Him. God the Father had “sealed” Him for this very work, that is, He had been prepared and sent by the Father for the task.

“Then they asked Him, ‘What must we do to do the works God requires?’.” (vi. 28),

and the Lord’s reply was right to the point:

“Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent’. So they asked Him, ‘What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written; He gave them bread from heaven to eat’.” (vi. 29-31).

Westcott states that the Lord’s reply “contains the complete solution of the relation of faith and works”. In the same way Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, mentions their “work of faith” (I Thess. i. 3). The Lord Jesus declares that belief in Him is the work of God. The Greek verb has the force of “that you may keep on believing”.

In spite of the gigantic miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, they ask for a further sign and quote Psa. lxxviii. 24 “He gave them bread from heaven to eat” and doubtless they ascribed all this to Moses. Yet a greater than Moses had just fed them in a stupendous way!

Christ now corrects their attitude:

“Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He Who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world’.” (vi. 32, 33).

The phrase “coming down” is used seven times in this discourse (vi. 33, 38, 41, 42, 50, 51, 58). The real donor of the manna was God, not Moses. God met all the needs of His people both in the wilderness and in the promised land. But there was an infinitely greater gift of spiritual food which the Lord was now offering them. Even the manna was perishable (Exod. xvi. 20), but this food was of another kind. It had everlasting effects and gave eternal life. It was indeed the “true bread” out of heaven, for it represented Christ and His atoning work. John sets forth the Lord as “the *true* Light” (i. 9), “the *true* Bread” (vi. 32), and “the *true* Vine” (xv. 1). The word “true” here is not meaning true as

opposed to false, but *real* as opposed to *shadow or type*. It is the relationship of type to antitype. Here Christ explains the difference between the typical manna and Himself, the *true* Bread from heaven, giving life *to the world*, not just to Israel.

Like the Samaritan woman who asked the Lord to give her the living water that He spoke about, so now His hearers eagerly request the gift of this bread for always (vi. 34). They were still thinking of His words in a material sense, so the Lord Jesus replies with a statement which they must have found astounding:

“Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the Bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty’.” (vi. 35).

This is the first of the great “I am” (*ego eimi*) sayings of the Lord, recorded in this Gospel, *ego eimi*. Normally the pronoun is not expressed separately from the verb in Greek. When it is, there is always emphasis. Carefully note the further occurrences of these two words in vi. 41, 48, 51; viii. 12, 58; x. 7, 9, 11, 14; xi. 25; xiv. 6; xv. 1, 5. They are all very important statements and take one back to the great I AM title of God in Exod. iii. 13, 14.

Especially is this so in chapter viii. in the Lord’s argument with the Pharisees. We shall give further consideration to this when we read this chapter.

**No.12. vi. 36 - 71.
pp. 101 - 105**

After the tremendous statement that He was the Bread of life, which, if received by faith, would give eternal satisfaction, the Lord had to say to His hearers:

“But as I told you, you have seen Me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never drive away” (vi. 36, 37, N.I.V.).

“All that the Father gives Me” is the death knell of universalism. Note how this is stressed by Christ (see vi. 39, 65; xvii. 2, 6, 9, 12, 24; xviii. 9). Whether this is a large company or small is not revealed and it is fruitless to guess. However many make this number, they are all eternally safe (x. 29), and all will come to Him by constraining grace and never will He turn any away. This is the Father’s will which the Son had come to carry out, and it will most certainly be fulfilled to the letter.

Professor F. F. Bruce comments here, “In the first part of verse 37 the pronoun ‘all’ is neuter singular, *pan*, denoting the sum-total of believers. In the second part (‘the one who comes’), each individual member of this sum-total is in view”.

“For I have come down from heaven not to do My will, but to do the will of Him Who sent Me. And this is the will of Him Who sent Me that I shall lose none of all that He has

given Me, but raise them up at the last day. For My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (vi. 38-40).

We are assured here that the Father and Son and Holy Spirit are engaged in the salvation of all believers and they will be safely guarded by them until the "last day" and then the Son, by His divine power, will bring them back to life if they have died. This He had emphasized before, as we have seen. To a large extent the resurrection of the believer is ignored today. Death is glamourized and this is what so many Christians are looking forward to, rather than the life-giving power of the Conqueror of death. "The last day" occurs four times (vi. 39, 40, 44, 54) and is evidently this very time of resurrection, when "all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come out" (v. 28) with eternal life ahead of them if they are believers. These are the two things which God has joined together for the believer's hope and it is sure and certain.

"At this the Jews began to grumble about Him because He said, 'I am the Bread that came down from heaven'. They said, 'Is this not Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can He now say, 'I came down from heaven'?'." (vi. 41, 42).

The people were well acquainted with His family. He was known as "the son of Joseph", and in Mark vi. 3 "the son of Mary". How then could He talk of "coming down from heaven"? They had no conception of Him as the eternal Word.

" 'Stop grumbling among yourselves', Jesus answered. 'No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day'." (vi.43,44)

In these verses those who come to Christ are described as being drawn to Him by the Father. In John xii. 32 it is Christ, when He is lifted up from the earth Who draws all (without distinction) to Himself.

Sin has so blinded the mind, so corrupted the faculties, that if God did not "draw", men would not respond at all. The Father draws and this may or may not result in salvation, for the next step is to "hear" and "believe", and in this way such come to Christ.

As the hymn writer expressed it:

"He loved me ere I knew Him.
He drew me with the cords of love
And thus He bound me to Him."

Christ now quotes Isa. liv. 13 which says that all Israel's children shall be taught of God, but they have to come to Him first for such teaching. This does not mean that such will *see* God. Only the Son is able to do this. But they could see the Father in Him (the Son) with the eye of faith (John xii. 45; xiv. 9). Hence the Lord Jesus stresses its necessity. *He who believes* has eternal life (vi. 47).

"I am (*ego eimi*) the Bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the Bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and

not die. I am (*ego eimi*) the living Bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live for ever. This Bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (vi. 48-51).

Christ is the life-giving Bread which delivers all who receive Him by faith from the power of death. This the manna was unable to do. All the Israelites fed on the manna during their wilderness journey, yet they all died, for although this was a heavenly provision, it could not impart eternal life. But those who “eat” of Him, that is appropriate Him by faith, are guarded from eternal death and receive everlasting life. The Lord further explains that this Bread represents His flesh which He is to give for the *life of the world*. “For” is the Greek *huper*, “in behalf of”, which implies *sacrifice*. To give one’s flesh means death. The Baptist had pointed to Christ as the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the *world*. This is by His death which is voluntary (“I will give”) and vicarious (“for the life of the world”).

It is this Gospel that emphasizes the world-wide scope of the Lord’s saving work. He was sent “that the *world* should be saved through Him” (iii. 17 R.V.). He is the “Saviour of the *world*” (iv. 42), not merely the Saviour of Israel, for unless this was true, His earthly kingdom would never be realized in its fullness. There are dispensationalists upon whom these verses make little or no impression. But one thing is certain, no one can adequately expound this Gospel who has missed its world-wide teaching which of course includes Israel, but is not confined to that nation.

“Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, ‘How can this man gives us His flesh to eat?’ Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, unless you can eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me.’” (vi. 52-57).

These words not only puzzled Christ’s hearers, they sharply divided them and worked up bitter enmity. They fought (*emachonto*) a war of words, if not muscularly. It may be that a few sensed that He was speaking figuratively, but it is obvious that the majority did not do so. They must have known that Christ was not seriously implying cannibalism, yet they could not fathom His meaning. The law given through Moses imposed a ban on any drinking of blood. The idea of drinking the blood of Christ was utterly abhorrent. And to make matters worse, in verse 54 and following this, the normal word to eat, *phagein*, is not used, but *trōgein*, which in earlier Greek meant “to munch” like animals eating!

Today we sometimes use the figure of eating and digesting, to express understanding. We talk about “digesting” a fact, and this is similar to the figurative language the Lord was using. If we look back to verse 40, we find the Lord expressing the same truth without figures:

“For My Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Those who see Him and believe in Him are the same as those who eat His flesh and drink His blood, for they both have eternal life and will be raised by Christ at the last day.

Figures of speech are a vivid way of presenting facts, and the Lord Jesus uses them here to strongly stress the need of coming to Him, believing in Him and appropriating Him by faith. This language is *not* a prophetic forecast of the Lord's Supper. It is absolutely untrue to teach that salvation comes through partaking the bread and wine of the communion service. The words of the Lord Jesus here can only have a spiritual meaning as He unfolds Himself as the true Manna. The fact is that the fourth Gospel has no record of the institution of the Lord's Supper in the upper room.

“He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. On hearing it, many of His disciples said, ‘This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?’” (vi. 59, 60).

The verses that remain in this chapter are an appendix to this great discourse, giving the reaction of many of those who claimed to be His disciples. They found the Lord's language crude and hard to understand. Not only this, but His words implied that He was greater than Moses whom they revered; in fact that He was equal with God.

“Aware that His disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, ‘Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where He was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe’. For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray Him. He went on to say, ‘This is why I told you that no-one can come to Me unless the Father has enabled him’. From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him” (vi. 61-66).

From these verses it is clear that there were varied opinions about Christ, yet they are all called “disciples” or learners. But what is the mark of a true disciple of Christ? He Himself gives it in viii. 31, “Jesus said, If *you hold to My teaching*, you are really My disciples”. This is what many did not do, and thereby showed that there was no real depth in their understanding or loyalty. They were disciples only in name.

As John ii. 24 assures us, the Lord knew the unspoken thoughts of those who were listening to Him. He adds to His teaching. He had declared more than once of His descent from heaven. Would they believe if they saw Him ascend back to heaven? (vi.62). Doubtless the answer was ‘no’. If they were not feeding on Christ and abiding solely in Him, then their profession would not last and they would turn aside. And so it has always been. Those who are the true disciples will hold fast to Christ notwithstanding the difficulties and doubts that sometimes arise.

The Lord turns to the Twelve and says, “you do not want to leave too, do you?”. From the negative used in the Greek, the answer is ‘no’ and this is confirmed in Peter's answer:

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that You are the Holy One of God” (vi. 68, 69).

Peter was obviously voicing the belief and feelings of the others, except one, showing indeed that they were true disciples who were prepared to go on with the Lord whatever the cost. They had been chosen (elected) by Him. The exception was Judas Iscariot and the Lord describes him as a devil, but “adversary” would be a more suitable description of him, who finally gave himself over to Satan. This is the first mention of him here and he is identified as the one who was to turn traitor. So also with the other Evangelists (Matt. x. 4; Mark iii. 19; Luke vi. 16). The shadow of this terrible act was cast before. Twelve months later it actually happened.

No.13. vii. 1 - 44.
pp. 132 - 137

“After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judaea because the Jews there were waiting to take His life.”

The Lord Jesus had been avoiding Judaea because, as He expressed it, “His hour had not yet come” and there was no point in putting Himself into danger before that crucial time arrived. The religious leaders had been planning to kill Him for some while (v. 18).

This avoidance of Jerusalem was puzzling to the Lord’s brothers (or rather half-brothers). Although they did not believe in Him (vii. 5) until after His resurrection, yet they felt that if He really was the Messiah, or a great leader, He should be in the capital city or thereabout, where all could see His miracles and hear His teaching. They said to Him:

“You ought to leave here and go to Judaea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world. For even His own brothers did not believe in Him” (vii. 3-5).

Verse 2 tells us that the Feast of Tabernacles was near. This was the seventh and last of the Jewish yearly feasts. It was the time of harvest, a time of rejoicing, the end of their agricultural and religious year. It was a time of pilgrimage from the outlying parts of Palestine and also for Hebrews living abroad. All made a great effort to attend the chief festivals at Jerusalem.

With such a gathering of people, the Lord’s brothers evidently thought it would be a fine opportunity for Him to do something spectacular there to impress the people. Many thought that the Messiah when He came would perform such an act. What they did not realize was that outward signs meant little without appreciation of the inward truth they were intended to convey.

It appeared incredible to them that the Messiah should deliberately avoid publicity, especially after the wonderful signs He had given in Galilee.

“Therefore Jesus told them, ‘The right time for Me has not yet come; for you any time is right. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify that what it does is evil. You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for Me the right time has not yet come’. Having said this, He stayed in Galilee. However, after His brothers had left for the Feast, He went also, not publicly, but in secret” (vii. 6-10).

Christ had testified to His mother that His hour had not yet come (ii. 4) and He gives a similar reply to His brothers. The time of His public showing as Messiah and King was decided by the Father and it was certainly coming, but not until the right moment arrived. Until then He would remain as He was. Six months later it would be proper for Him to make His public entry into Jerusalem. Now He bids farewell to Galilee, never to see it again before His death, and makes a secret journey to Judaea.

“Now at the Feast the Jews were watching for Him and asking, ‘Where is that man?’” (vii. 11).

The scene now moves to Jerusalem. The Jewish leaders were watching for Him, hoping they might have an opportunity to arrest Him. He had been in Galilee for a year, but Galilee was ruled by the tetrarch Herod Antipas and was not under the jurisdiction of the religious leaders. However, in Jerusalem they held chief executive power in Jewish affairs, subject to the authority of the Roman governor. Now perhaps was their opportunity.

“Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about Him. Some said, ‘He is a good man’. Others replied, ‘No, He deceives the people’. But no one would say anything publicly about Him for fear of the Jews” (vii. 12, 13).

Among the people there were varying opinions about Christ. Some, remembering His acts of mercy, said He was a good man. Others thought the opposite, but whatever their views, they did not talk about them too publicly, lest the leaders should be displeased.

“Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the Temple courts and begin to teach. The Jews were amazed and asked, ‘How did this man get such learning without having studied?’” (vii. 14, 15).

The Lord Jesus arrived quietly halfway through the Festival and began to teach in the outer court of the Temple. As the people listened they were amazed at His powerful exposition of the Scriptures. Where did He get His knowledge from, seeing that He had not been trained in any of the great rabbinical schools? The Sanhedrin later had the same problem with Peter and John (Acts iv. 13). The scribes and Pharisees usually based their teaching on and quoted from some past teacher of repute, but this was not so with regard to Christ. He spoke with authority without reference to anyone. Where did He get this authority from?

The Lord’s reply to them was:

“My teaching is not My own. It comes from Him Who sent Me. If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether My teaching comes from God or whether I speak on My own. He who speaks on his own does so to gain honour for himself, but he who works for the honour of the One Who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill Me?” (vii. 16-19).

Like the men of God of the O.T. who were God's spokesman, the greatest Prophet of all came to make known the Father and declare His Truth. Behind it all was the willing mind so to do. It is important for us to distinguish between the word "will" relating to the future, and the word *thelo* to will or to wish. The A.V. often does not make this clear. There must be harmony between man's purpose and God's will. Here it is rendered in the N.I.V. "if anyone *chooses* to do God's will". Such readiness of heart leads to the knowledge of God and His purpose. The leaders made much of the law of God given through Moses. Yet their actions proved this to be an empty profession. The law commanded, "thou shalt not kill". Why then were they constantly breaking it by seeking to murder Him?

"The crowd answered, 'You are demon-possessed. Who is trying to kill you?'" (vii. 20).

The Lord now returns to the false accusation of sabbath breaking. He tells them that they circumcise a child on the sabbath day and if they could do this without breaking sabbath regulations, how much more could He perform a miracle of healing on the sabbath day without infringing the law! Their judgment was absolutely superficial; there was no righteousness in it. "Stop judging by mere appearances and make a right judgment" He said (24).

This needs to be sounded abroad today. How much unfair criticism and misrepresentation there is in this age. And this is not confined to non-Christians. Many believers indulge in this sort of thing with other believers. They need to be reminded that judgment of others (criticism) should be avoided. This is the clear teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and the epistles (Matt. vii. 1, 2; I Cor. xi. 31). One sinner criticizing another sinner is not very edifying.

"At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, 'Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? Here He is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to Him. Have the authorities really concluded that He is the Christ? But we know where this man is from; when the Christ comes no-one will know where He is from'" (vii. 25-27).

The crowd were obviously concerned with the attitude of their leaders to Christ. We must remember that the Galilean Jews knew Him only as from Nazareth, not as born in Bethlehem.

The Lord answered them:

"Then Jesus, still teaching in the Temple courts, cried out, 'Yes, you know Me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on My own, but He Who sent Me is true. You do not know Him, but I know Him because I am from Him and He sent Me'." (vii. 28, 29).

This statement is like that recorded in Matt. xi. 27, "no-one knows the Father except the Son". Again the Lord asserts His unique relationship with the Father and those who are listening do not miss the implication of His words.

“At this they tried to seize Him, but no-one laid a hand on Him because His time had not yet come. Still, many in the crowd put their faith in Him. They said, ‘When the Christ comes, will He do more miraculous signs than this man?’” (vii. 30, 31).

This attempt to arrest Him came to nothing, because God, Who is sovereign, knew that the hour for His arrest, followed by the suffering and the cross, had not yet come.

But the people debated whether, when Messiah arrived, He would perform greater miraculous signs than Christ was continually performing. The Galileans in the crowd would remember the feeding of the 5,000 six months ago, just as the natives of Jerusalem would recall the healing of the cripple at the Bethesda pool.

“The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about Him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent Temple guards to arrest Him” (vii. 32).

The Pharisees and Sadducees represent the Sanhedrin, the ruling court. The Temple guards were the Temple police who were responsible for the maintenance of law and order within the precincts of the Temple. They were a picked body of Levites and their commanding captain wielded high authority, next only to the high priests.

“Jesus said, ‘I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the One Who sent Me. You will look for Me, but you will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come’” (vii. 33, 34).

Those who were listening could not understand Him. Did He mean that He would leave Palestine and go to the dispersion abroad where there were Jewish colonies? (vii.35,36). Here, Professor F. F. Bruce aptly says, “little did the speakers know that, while Jesus was not to go in person among the Greeks, His followers would be numbered in tens of thousands in the Greek lands in a few years time”.

“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him’. By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified” (vii. 37-39).

The “short time” (33) related to the six months on to the last Passover, and then the offering of Himself on the cross. Christ had already told the woman of Samaria of this “living water” (iv. 14), and this in reality was the gift of the Spirit, which could not be imparted in its fullness until the Lord Jesus was glorified. This tremendous gift is expanded in the sixteenth chapter (xvi. 7). His death and resurrection was His glorification (xii. 23).

“On hearing His words, some of the people said, ‘Surely this man is the Prophet’. Others said, ‘He is the Christ’. Still others asked, ‘How can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David’s family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?’. Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. Some wanted to seize Him, but no-one laid a hand on Him” (vii. 40-44).

The various ideas among the people are brought out in these verses. There was clearly a split in their conception of the Prophet and the true Messiah. Some said He came from

Galilee and therefore could not be the Messiah. They quoted Micah v. 2 which gave the truth, but they were ignorant of the fact that Christ was born in Bethlehem. The confusion here is with the Jews, not the author of the Gospel as some have erroneously maintained.

**No.14. vii. 45 - viii. 24.
pp. 167 - 172**

“Finally the Temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, ‘Why didn’t you bring Him in?’. ‘No-one ever spoke the way this man does’, the guards declared. ‘You mean He has deceived you also?’ the Pharisees retorted. ‘Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in Him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them’.” (John vii. 45-48, N.I.V.).

The leaders were evidently waiting for the police to return with Christ as a prisoner. Now even the police had fallen under His spell! Police officers are not usually carried away by public speech, but these had been gripped by the power of the Lord’s words. They asserted that no human being ever spoke as He did, with such authority (Matt.vii.29).

The Pharisees were outraged, and they sneered at the police by accusing them of being deceived. “Have any of the Pharisees believed in Him?” they said, and in the Greek the question expects the answer “No”. Surely if He was genuine, some of the leaders would have accepted Him!

The common people, ignorant of the law, might believe His claims, but that was to be expected. Their argument was quite unsound, because as the next verses tells us, one of the rulers evidently was impressed by Him.

“Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, ‘Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?’. They replied, ‘Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee’.” (vii. 50-52).

Nicodemus was last mentioned in chapter iii., when he came to the Lord by night. Now he boldly protests against the injustice of condemning Christ unheard. He was a ruler of the Jews and as a teacher he knew the law and could quote it authoritatively. The leaders had no legal answer. They had a contempt for the Galileans and their statement that no prophet ever came from Galilee was certainly wrong, for Jonah, Hosea, Nahum, Elijah, Elisha and Amos could be traced from Galilee. In their rage the Pharisees were regardless of the true facts.

Chapter viii.

The first twelve verses of chapter viii. are missing in the N.I.V., R.S.V. and N.E.B. as they are not found in some of the earliest manuscripts. As this involves the Greek texts, we give the comments of Professor F. F. Bruce. He writes:

“These twelve verses are missing from a wide variety of early Greek manuscripts from the earliest forms of the Syriac and Coptic Gospels, from several Armenian, Old Georgian and Old Latin manuscripts, and from the Gothic Bible. They constitute, in fact, a fragment of the authentic gospel material not originally included in any of the four Gospels. Its preservation (for which we should be thankful) is due to the fact that it was inserted at what seemed to be a not inappropriate place in the Gospel of John or Luke. Among the manuscripts of John which include it, the majority place it between 7:52 and 8:12; others place it after 7:36, after 7:44, or after 21:25. One family of manuscripts (family 13) places it after 21:38. Many of the witnesses which do contain it mark it with asterisks or daggers, to indicate the uncertainty of its textual attestation. In style it has closer affinities with the Synoptic Gospels than with John. One reason for its being placed in this context in John may have been the idea that it served as an illustration of Jesus’ words in 8:15, ‘I judge no-one’ (Appendix, *The Gospel of John*).”

Those who possess *The Companion Bible*, should read the comments on this passage. The reader will note the various places in which this section occurs and also that some manuscripts put it in Luke, but, as Professor Bruce says, it is authentic gospel material for which we should be thankful, and we need have no doubts as to its truth. We give it in the translation of J. N. Darby:

“And early in the morning He came again into the Temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. And the Scribes and Pharisees bring (to Him) a woman taken in adultery, and having set her in the midst, they say to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman has been taken in the very act, committing adultery. Now in the law Moses has commanded us to stone such: Thou, therefore, what sayest Thou?’. But this they said proving Him, that they might have (something) to accuse Him (of)” (viii. 2-6).

As the last words show, those critics were not primarily concerned with the offence, but rather they introduced it to trip Christ up if possible. In any case, where was the guilty partner? Why was he allowed to escape? It appears that the old law was not rigorously applied in the first century. But in some parts of the East it is still upheld today.

What is your opinion? the Scribes and Pharisees asked the Lord, hoping that He might rule differently from Moses and so become a breaker of the law. Again we see Christ’s matchless wisdom in the way He dealt with the situation:

“But Jesus, having stooped down, wrote with His finger on the ground. But when they continued asking Him, He lifted Himself up and said to them, ‘Let him who is without sin among you first cast the stone at her’. And again stooping down He wrote on the ground” (viii. 7, 8).

This is the only mention of writing by the Lord. The question was like the one dealing with the tribute money; whichever way He answered, He could be caught on the horns of a dilemma. What was it He wrote on the ground? Many have been the guesses. It has

been suggested that He was writing the words He uttered in verse 7, but we cannot know for certain. One thing is clear, the Lord did not modify Mosaic law, but He ruled that only those who were guiltless of this particular sin, could justly carry out the sentence. And the fact that none of the accusers could face up to this showed their hypocrisy, for they went out one by one. They were asked to judge themselves rather than the woman.

“But they, having heard (that), went out one by one beginning from the elder ones until the last; and Jesus was left alone and the woman standing there. And Jesus, lifting Himself up, and seeing no-one but the woman, said to her, ‘Woman, where are those thine accusers? Has no-one condemned thee?’. And she said, ‘No-one, Sir’. And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more’.” (viii. 10, 11).

There is no evidence that the woman knew who He was, and the Lord accepted the charge of her accusers as being true, yet, knowing all the facts about her, Christ refuses to condemn her, for He came not to judge the world, but to save the world (xii. 47). He discharges her without condoning her sin. The warning He gave her was similar to the one He gave to the man who was cured at the Bethesda pool (v. 14).

Professor Bruce concludes this section by saying, “Whatever textual problems are raised by this passage, the account has all the earmarks of historical veracity. We may safely recognize the incident as taking place in the Temple precincts during Holy Week”.

“When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’.” (viii.12, N.I.V.).

This is another of the great “I am” (*ego eimi*) statements by the Lord Jesus. Christ had called His followers “the light of the world” (Matt. v. 14), but that was light reflected from Him. He Himself was the true light (John i. 9; iii. 19). The Psalmist called God his light (Psa. xxvii. 1) and all is darkness without Him. When will people learn that to ignore Christ and walk without Him is to stumble along in darkness? And in the darkness there can be so many falls that cause hurt and disappointment.

He Who is the Light of the whole world must include Gentiles as well as Jews. This was doubtless startling to the Pharisees and Sadducees who despised the Gentile world and had forgotten why they had been placed among them. The light which springs from the Lord Jesus issues in life that is eternal.

“The Pharisees challenged Him, ‘Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid’. Jesus answered, ‘Even if I testify on My own behalf, My testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no-one. But if I do judge, My decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, Who sent Me. In your own law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. I am one Who testifies for Myself; My other witness is the Father, Who sent Me’.” (viii. 13-18).

Whatever the Lord Jesus says about Himself is not unsupported. The Son was speaking the Father’s words and by His authority. It was quite a false charge to accuse Christ of speaking of and from Himself. In v. 31, the Lord acknowledged the need of

further witness outside His own claims (19-30), and proceeded to give it (32-47), as we have seen in the testimony of John the Baptist, of the Father, of His works, of the Scriptures and of Moses in particular. He goes on to refer to His words recorded in v.37. A charge could only be sustained if supported by two or three witnesses (Deut. xvii. 6; xix. 15), and these had to be true separately. If they disagree, the testimony collapses. But the Father had abundantly confirmed the witness of the Son, as Christ had already shown (v. 37).

“Then they asked Him, ‘Where is your father?’. ‘You do not know Me or My Father’, Jesus replied. ‘If you knew Me, you would know My Father also’. He spoke these words while teaching in the Temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no-one seized Him, because His time had not yet come” (viii. 19, 20).

Christ had already told His critics that they had never heard the Father’s voice nor seen His form (v. 37). Similarly He tells them now that they are incapable of knowing the Father or knowing where He is. They probably knew where Christ came from an earthly standpoint, but they were blind and utterly ignorant of His eternal origin or His relationship with the Father.

These words were spoken in the treasure-chambers of the Temple joining the Court of the women.

“Once more Jesus said to them, ‘I am going away, and you will look for Me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come” (viii. 21).

The Lord’s words were still beyond the grasp of His hearers. He was going away and they could not follow Him. While He was with them it was the day of opportunity. If they believe and accept Him, then they would have the right to become the children of God with eternal life to follow. If they do not, they would die in their sin, without having the sin removed. Note sin in the *singular* (21), but *plural* in verse 24, (that is sin in its essence and sin in its acts).

Recently when He spoke like this, they thought He might be planning to go to the lands of the Dispersion. Now they wonder if He means suicide—‘will He kill Himself?’. He was indeed going to meet a violent death but at *their* hands, not His own. The Lord makes a sharp distinction between two realms:

“But He continued, ‘you are from below; I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am (the One I claim to be), you will indeed die in your sins’.” (viii. 23, 24).

Christ came from the heavenly realm, the heaven above. They were limited to the earthly realm, with no possibility of reaching that upper realm by their own ideas or efforts. The Lord Himself was the only Way by which they might ascend there, and this way they refused to take. They would rather remain in the darkness than come to the One Who was the Light of the world.

No.15. viii. 25 - 48.
pp. 181 - 186

The rendering of the N.E.B. of verse 24 is “If you do not believe that I am what I am (*ego eimi*), you will die in your sins”. These very important words occur in verses 28 & 58 and have more than one shade of meaning in this Gospel. The Lord uses them when He identifies Himself to the disciples on the lake and says “It is I”. In other instances, as we have seen, He uses them of Himself in His relationship to the Father and the Father’s redemptive purpose, and this takes us back to God revealing Himself to Moses at the burning bush, making known His purpose for Moses to go to Pharaoh. When asked for a name, God said “Tell them that I AM has sent you” (Exod. iii. 14) and here the Septuagint has *ego eimi*, (the One Who is). These words are repeatedly used in Isaiah in the Greek of the Septuagint [Isa. xli. 4; xliii. 10, 25 (twice); xlvi. 4; xlviiii. 12] and relate to God Himself, the great *Yahweh* or *Jehovah*. The Lord Jesus does not hesitate to use these two words for Himself and if He is not God, then He must be a blasphemer.

Verse 25 is a difficult sentence in the original which has been rendered in varying ways by translators. The answer to the question “Who are you?” has this sense, “even that which I have also spoken unto you from the beginning”, or possibly “primarily”. The N.I.V. has “just what I have been claiming all along”, or F. F. Bruce, “I am what I have been telling you all along”. The Lord follows this by saying, “He Who sent Me is reliable, and what I have heard from Him I tell *the world*” (26). Again the message goes further than Israel. It is basic truth for mankind as a whole.

“They did not understand that He was telling them about His Father. So Jesus said, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am and that I do nothing on My own but speak just what the Father has taught Me. The One Who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do what pleases Him’. Even as He spoke, many put their faith in Him” (viii. 27-30, N.I.V.).

In iii. 34 we are assured that “He Whom God has sent speaks the words of God”, and this important fact is stressed constantly by the Lord Jesus. The student should consult the following verses—viii. 26, 28; xii. 49, 50; xiv. 10, 24; xvii. 8, 14. Christ’s words are God’s words, and must always be treated as such. Faithfulness will not allow any other attitude towards them.

As a result of these words of the Lord, the Evangelist tells us that “many put their faith in Him”, and so once again the main object of this Gospel was realized: “but these (signs) are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name” (xx. 31 A.V.). The lifting up of the Son of Man (*hupsou*) is used several times in John of the cross of Christ (iii. 14; viii. 28; xii.32,34).

This is where the glorification started of the One Who *always* did what pleased the Father. It is the result of His complete sinlessness, for no human being since the Fall of Adam *always* pleases God in every thought, word and deed.

“To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’” (John viii. 31, 32, N.I.V.).

The word “abide” or “remain” (*meno*) is one of John’s characteristic words. It is one thing to believe a person; it is another to continually hold fast to that belief. Christ is saying to His hearers, your *future loyalty* to My teaching will prove the *reality of your present profession*. Discipleship is continuous; it is a way of life. Only those who truly believe or trust will hold fast permanently. False belief can only result in bondage, but God’s truth can free them and these are the words of One Who personified truth (xiv. 6). This freedom is real and precious, but it never means licence. We are free to accomplish *all that God wants us to be and do*, free from the slavery of sin, and free to do His will, which is the only state that can give us lasting satisfaction. Paul was the apostle of freedom (Gal. v. 1), and without such freedom, it is impossible to serve the Lord; for slaves are for ever bound and in shackles and as such can do nothing of themselves.

The Pharisees who were listening to Him replied:

“They answered Him, ‘we are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?’. Jesus replied, ‘I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it for ever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill Me, because you have no room for My word. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father’.” (viii. 33-38, N.I.V.).

A. T. Robertson rightly says, “Freedom (intellectual, moral and spiritual) is attainable when we are set free from darkness, sin, ignorance, superstition, and let the Light of the World shine on us and in us” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*). The listeners said, “We are Abraham’s seed” and this was their proudest boast. Yes, but the Jews came to rely solely on mere physical descent (Matt. iii. 9) and what they said was not true, for at that moment they were under the Roman yoke as they had been in the past under Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, the Ptolomies, the Syrian (Seleucid). They completely missed the point of Christ’s words about real freedom. The Lord’s teaching here is similar to Paul’s in Rom. vi. 12-23.

The illustration now changes to the contrast between the positions of the son and the slave in the house, and we should remember that slavery obtained at this time. A slave had no permanent standing in the master’s home. He could be cast out at any moment, while the son and heir had a permanent place—once a son, always a son.

But Christ could free slaves from the bondage of sin and death, and if He did so, *they were really free*, it was no sham thing.

Christ agreed that, from a natural standpoint, they were physically descended from Abraham:

“I know you are Abraham’s descendants. Yet you are ready to kill Me, because you have no room for My word. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, and you do what you have heard from your father” (viii. 37, 38, N.I.V.).

The Lord Jesus differentiates between “My Father” and “your father”. By the time this address is finished we shall see that Christ is teaching that there are two families with two fathers which are utterly opposed to one another, and the implications of this we must consider.

“ ‘Abraham is our father’, they answered. ‘If you were Abraham’s children’ said Jesus, ‘then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill Me, a man who told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the things your own father does’. ‘We are not illegitimate children’, they protested. ‘The only Father we have is God Himself’.” (viii. 39-41, N.I.V.).

Romans ix. 1-8 makes it quite clear that physical descent from Abraham does not prove that such are the real children of God.

“For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because *they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children:* but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Rom. ix. 6, 7, A.V.). Abraham had children by other women, but they did not constitute the true seed. Physical descent was not enough. The real seed only came through Isaac, and in this way were linked to special promise of God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The Jews whom Christ was addressing were not the true seed of Abraham, for had they been so they would have followed Abraham’s example and proclaimed it by their actions. The Lord told them that if they had been Abraham’s children, they would have performed Abraham’s works. Instead of this they were doing their father’s works (John.viii.39-41) and that father, as the context makes clear, was none other but Satan, the murderer from the beginning (viii. 44). In their mad desire to murder Him, they were acting like their father. Abraham welcomed and believed the Word of God and obeyed His commandments. God said of him, “Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws” (Gen. xxvi. 5). The acts of the Pharisees were totally contrary to this. They did not exhibit Abraham’s character. Nor was there anything of the heavenly Father’s character to be seen in them, however much they might protest that they were Abraham’s real children. All the time the Pharisees were failing because their carnal minds were limited to the physical side of things. And because of this they did not understand what Christ was saying to them, nor did they show any love for Him Who had come from God to make Him known to them and at great cost to be their Redeemer and King (John viii. 42, 43).

Now the Lord in plain language says to them:

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in

him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (viii. 44, N.I.V.).

If these words are true, and they surely are, terrible thought they may be, then they indicate that there are two seeds among mankind. At the very beginning, after the fall of Adam, God indicates that there would be two seeds, one from Adam and the other from the serpent (Satan). He said, “I will put enmity between thee (Satan) and the woman (Eve), and *between thy seed and her seed*; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. iii. 15 A.V.). This terrible revelation had been given by Christ in parabolic form (Matt. xiii. 24-30, 36-42); the wheat and the tares represent these two companies. “The *good seed* are the children of the kingdom; but the *tares* are the children of (*ek*) the wicked one; *the enemy that sowed them is the devil*” (Matt. xiii. 38, 39 A.V.). There is not the slightest hint in this parable that the good seed were ever tares, nor could tares ever become wheat. The only end for the tares was to be burned up and finally completely destroyed (40-42). The aim of the enemy (Satan) here was to make a sowing of that which would look exactly like the true seed so the false seed could not be distinguished from it. Thus the true sowing would be corrupted and ruined.

We see this working out with our first parents. In spite of her sin, God promised Eve that her seed should bruise the serpent (Satan), and evidently she thought her first child, Cain, was the answer to this promise:

“Now the man having come to know Eve his wife,—she conceived and bare Cain and said ‘I have gotten a Man, even Yahweh (Jehovah)’.” (Gen. iv. 1, Rotherham).

It is noteworthy that Cain was not said to be begotten in Adam’s likeness. This was reserved for Seth (Gen. v. 3).

When we come to John’s first epistle, we get further light on Cain. In iii. 12 we read, “Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous”. We should note here that the words “belonged to” expressed the Greek *ek* (out of, expressing origin). It is a preposition that John uses frequently. Cain’s origin was linked with Satan the murderer, and no wonder he became a murderer himself. The same preposition is used by Christ when he says to the Pharisees, “you are of (*ek*) your father the devil” (you originate from him). John makes a clear distinction between the seed of Satan and the seed of God, the tares and the wheat.

All this is part of the great conflict of the ages which primarily is not between Satan and the human race, but between Satan and God, the enemy constantly seeking to overthrow God’s redemptive plan, so that in the end he (Satan) can triumph, take God’s place, and rule all creation. The Pharisees who opposed the Lord Jesus were the dupes of Satan in their blindness and hardness of heart, however much they imagined themselves to be the true seed of Abraham. Actually the Lord is telling them that they are not Abraham’s seed but part of the seed of the serpent and at the end, instead of receiving the gift of eternal life, they would get eternal death.

No wonder they hated Christ and poured contempt on Him. They accused him of being demon-possessed (John viii. 48, 52). In spite of this insult, the Lord finishes His debate with them by claiming to be the great I AM, the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

**No.16. viii. 49 - ix. 39.
pp. 201 - 205**

Instead of being demon-possessed, the Lord asserted to the Pharisees that He honoured the Father, and they dishonoured and insulted Him by rejecting the Son Who was His mouthpiece. Again He stressed that all who trusted and followed Him faithfully would not experience eternal death, for His word was life-giving that would never have an end. The enemies chose to take the words as referring to death of the body.

“At this the Jews exclaimed, ‘Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death. Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?’” (viii. 52, 53, N.I.V.).

Of course Abraham and the prophets were dead physically, but the Lord was meaning spiritual death and in no sense was He exalting Himself. He said:

“If I glorify Myself, My glory means nothing. My Father, Whom you claim as your God, is the One Who glorifies Me. Though you do not know Him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing My day; he saw it and was glad” (viii. 54-56).

On no occasion did Christ praise Himself (v. 31). His constant desire was to glorify the Father. The leaders, on the other hand, in spite of all their religious activities, did not really know God or glorify Him, as their actions clearly testified. Their father Abraham rejoiced to see by faith the day when Christ would come into His own. He was among those in Heb. xi., who saw the promises “afar off” by faith, but did not receive them in his lifetime. He knew they were sure and certain nevertheless.

The Lord ends with the astounding statement,

“ ‘I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!’ . At this they picked up stones to stone Him, but Jesus hid Himself, slipping away from the Temple grounds” (viii. 58, 59).

Here is a climax statement, again using *ego eimi*, “Before Abraham was, I AM”. The words are not grammatical as they stand, compelling the reader to realize that “I am” is much more than the present tense of the verb “to be”. As we have seen before, all these great I AM statements take one back to the great title of God in Exod. iii. 14, “I am that I am”, “thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent unto you”. The same title is used again in Isa. xli. 4 and several more times in this context.

Modern readers may doubt this, but the Jews who were listening to the Lord, certainly did not, for they immediately took up stones to stone Him. They knew that I AM was a title of Jehovah and that Christ was therefore claiming to be God. If the Lord's deity is not true, then they were correct, for such language is blasphemous if made by any human being. There is no middle position. We either worship Him as God or we reject and stone Him. Hundreds of religious people today do the latter in their blindness and ignorance of the Word of God. [Those who wish to test this for themselves should consider the author's book *The Lord Jesus Christ, God or only Man?*.]

In spite of the threatening attitude of the Pharisees the Lord Jesus went out of the Temple. "His hour had not yet come." Once again, three months later, the Pharisees will try to kill Him, but He will pass out of their hands (x. 39).

Chapter ix.

We now come to the sixth of the miraculous sign, the healing of the man born blind.

"As He went along, He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked Him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'. 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned', said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him Who sent Me. Night is coming when no-one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world'." (ix. 1-5).

From the disciples' question, one can see that they had the idea that physical congenital troubles were caused either by the sin of the person concerned, or his parents. It is sometimes true that disease is the result of personal sin as in the case of the man at the Bethesda pool (v. 14), and parents can hand on the effects of sin to the third and fourth generation. In this instance it was not so, as the Lord made clear. Rather it was that the works of God might be manifested in him, and God's glory again revealed. This was the purpose behind it all, but we must not think that God deliberately caused the man when a child to be born blind, so that this miracle might be performed. God overruled the blindness so that by recovering his sight through the power of Christ, he might realize that this was the work of God and so would turn to the true Light of the world and put his faith in Him.

Christ said in effect, we must work while it is day, while we have the opportunity. Darkness was coming, for He Who was the world's Light was soon to leave it and return to the glory of heaven's holiest of all which He had left.

Then the light would be mediated through His faithful followers. But apart from this the world would become an exceedingly dark place under the control of the prince of darkness, Satan. The believer would be exhorted to let his light shine (Phil. ii. 15, 16), but this would not be equal to the One Who was the Light of the world. Even electric lights do not turn night into day.

“Having said this, He spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. ‘Go’, He told him, ‘wash in the Pool of Siloam (this word mean Sent)’. So the man went and washed, and came home seeing” (ix. 6, 7).

The Jews believed that saliva was efficacious for eye trouble, but forbade it on the Sabbath. We do not know why Christ acted along this line. It was not necessary to the cure of blindness and in other case of blindness He did not use it. Perhaps it was to encourage the man to believe. John gives us the meaning of the Hebrew word *Siloam*, for he constantly had Gentiles in mind who did not understand the language. It means “sent” and would link the mind with Christ as the Sent One from the Father, though the man was not in the position to understand this yet.

“His neighbours and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, ‘Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?’. Some claimed that he was. Others said, ‘No, he only looks like him’. But he himself insisted, ‘I am the man’. ‘How then were your eyes opened?’ they demanded. He replied, ‘The Man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see’. ‘Where is this man?’ they asked him. ‘I don’t know’, he said” (ix. 8-12).

There were differences of opinion among the neighbours concerning the beggar who had been healed. In the verses that follow we can see a growing appreciation of the Lord on his part. First of all Christ was “A man called Jesus” (11). On being asked the second time he said, “He is a prophet” (17) and then, a little later, “if this man were not from God, He could do nothing” (33). Then the Lord spoke to him and asked if he believed on the Son of God. “Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?”. “It is He that talketh with thee” Christ replied. And then the final saving response is, “Lord, I believe”, and he worshipped Him (35-38).

By these steps this man comes through darkness to light in more than one sense, and so fits in with the purpose of this Gospel (xx. 30, 31). In between these verses the Evangelist records the words and actions of the religious leaders when the man was brought to them for their verdict, and the fact that the healing had taken place on the Sabbath complicated matters still further, for this was largely the bone of contention between the Pharisees and the Lord as we have seen. In their false estimation they construed the healing of the blind man as work on the Sabbath day! These leaders had made their own list of what actions were permissible on the Sabbath and what were forbidden. On this list was *kneading*, and the making of mud or clay with earth and saliva was reckoned to be work, and so was not allowed!

They first of all question the man who tells them that Christ had put mud on his eyes, and he washed and found he could see! This was not sufficient for them, so they summon other witnesses (ix. 18). Not only the crowd was divided (vii. 43) but the Pharisees were as well (ix. 16). Some of them asked the man again:

“Finally they turned again to the blind man, ‘What have you to say about Him? It was your eyes He opened’.” (ix. 17).

The man’s answer was “He is a prophet”. This did not satisfy the leaders:

“The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man’s parents. ‘Is this your son?’ they asked. ‘Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?’” (ix. 18, 19).

The parents confirmed the fact that he had been born blind, but they did not know how he had received his sight. They were afraid to say more lest they were put out of the synagogue (20-22). Once more the Pharisees summoned the man and said that they knew “this man (Christ) is a sinner”. The reply they received was beyond argument:

“Whether He is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know, I was blind but now I see!” (ix. 25).

The Pharisees were doing their best to find some loophole that they could seize on to trip the Lord up. They put further pressure on the man who now decides to resist them, and the rest of the incident consists of sharp repartee between the two sides. The leaders hurled insults at him (ix. 28, 29). They said, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” (34). They were the great and mighty scholars and interpreters of the Mosaic law in their estimation, and this man was a complete ignoramus.

But he stated something that was beyond argument. He said, if this man were not from God, He could do nothing” (33). The leaders, realizing they were getting the worst of the argument, lost their tempers and drove the man out of the place where they were, and doubtless expelled him from the synagogue too. But as we have already seen, the Lord found him, spoke the words of eternal life, and the man responded and said, “Lord, I believe” and prostrated himself before Him in reverence.

The giving of the sight to the blind was one of the actions of Messiah foretold by the prophets (Isa. xxxv. 5; xlii. 7). At His coming “then the eyes of the blind shall be opened” and the ears of the deaf unstopped too. *These were signs of the coming of the earthly kingdom.* When John the Baptist’s faith began to fail in prison and he sent a message asking the Lord if He fulfilled the office of Messiah, Christ’s answer was:

“Go back and report to John what you hear and see: *The blind receive sight*, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of Me” (Matt. xi. 4-6).

The kingdom miraculous sign were happening and the King was present. No wonder the message was constantly given out by the Lord and the Twelve, “the kingdom of heaven is near”.

No.17. ix. 39 - x. 21.
pp. 221 - 225

The Lord Jesus concluded His healing work with the blind man by saying:

“For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind” (ix. 39, N.I.V.).

There appears to be a contradiction between this verse and iii. 17, xii. 47, where the Lord declares that He did not come to this world to judge but to save it. These verses state that He did not come to *execute judgment*. That lies in the future. Verse 39 which we are considering is linked to the reaction of those who witnessed His mighty works and words. Some will see and some will become blind. This is decided by themselves, whether they are for or against Him. They are not forced either way, but they have to come to a decision. As we have seen before, they cannot remain neutral. The Pharisees blinded their own eyes, yet they professed to see. In which case Christ declared that their guilt remained (41). Later He called them “blind guides” (Matt. xxiii. 16).

Chapter x.

This chapter begins with a double Amen which emphasizes its importance. Its great theme is the activity and concern of the true Shepherd for the sheep under His care. Israel, the people of God, are often called “sheep” in the O.T. and God Himself was their Shepherd (Psa. lxxix. 13; c. 3). He appointed under-shepherds, but many of them proved to be false teachers who looked after their own interests rather than the sheep entrusted to their care. This is clearly shown in Ezek. xxxiv. which the reader should consult. The Jews, listening to Christ, would therefore have no difficulty with the illustration He used of Himself as the Good Shepherd. Whether they accepted Him as such was another matter.

The Good Shepherd commences by saying:

“I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.”

The sheep pen was a large enclosure, square shaped, having one entrance on one side. This enabled someone to act as watchman to guard and regulate whoever came into the fold. If anyone was seen climbing in some other way, it was obvious that he was not a friend, but an enemy who had come to damage and to steal. There was a close link between the shepherd and his sheep. The sheep would follow him and recognize the voice of the shepherd, and this is still true today in the East (x. 3, 4). A stranger made no impression on them, for they could not recognize his voice (5).

“Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what He was telling them” (x. 6).

The word “parable” of the A.V. is not *parabole*, the usual word, but *paroimia*, a proverb, a deep saying. His listeners could not see the point of His story.

The Lord now adds another figure in verse 7:

“Therefore Jesus said again, ‘I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before Me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through Me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full’ (x. 7-10).

The Pharisees and others did not understand the Lord’s words, so to make them clearer, He adds the figure of the gate or door. There was only *one* door into the sheepfold, and that door or gate was an illustration of Christ Himself, for there is no other way to obtain salvation and the gift of everlasting life except through Him, and later He will describe Himself as the Way (xiv. 6). Others come and declare themselves to be the solution to all human troubles. Israel had had false leaders and false Messiahs who had led them to disaster (Acts v. 36, 37), hence the words of John x. 12 & 13, and the Lord will predict that there will be many more (Matt. xxiv. 23). They were like the worthless shepherd who deserts the flock (Zech. xi. 17). The true Shepherd on the other hand continually cares for the sheep, meeting all their needs. He is even willing to risk His life for them (John x. 11), and His one object is that they might have not ordinary life, but life to the full or in abundance, and that eternally:

“I am the good Shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me—just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father—and I lay down My life for the sheep” (x. 14, 15).

Not only is He alone the way into God’s sheepfold, but there is an intimacy between Him and His sheep. They know and love each other. Some may protest at the so-called narrowness of these verses of Christ and they point out that there is good in all religions and they all worship the same God. But has any one of these religions someone who like Christ had taken upon Himself the sin of the world and paid the penalty for that sin by dying in their place? Not only this, but is raised from the dead and has the power to raise from the dead all who believe and trust Him also, and guarantee to them everlasting life?

There is only *one* way to this, and that is through Christ by faith. Narrow it may be, but it is the narrowness of truth nevertheless, and it was this that the Lord was emphasizing to those who were listening to Him, some of whom were His enemies.

The Lord goes on,

“I have other sheep that are not of (*ek*) this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to My voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd” (x. 16).

Who are the “other sheep”? Some say they are the Jews of the dispersion, but this cannot be true for a number of reasons. The Lord Jesus says they are *not* of (*ek*) this fold. John uses this preposition many times to express *origin*. The “other sheep” do *not* originate from this fold, which is certainly Israel. Jewish nationality was not decided *by*

where a person lived, that is in the land of Israel or outside it. It was reckoned by whether he was a true descendant of Abraham through Isaac (Rom. ix. 7), and it mattered not where he resided. Hence the great influx of true Israelites from abroad to Jerusalem at the great annual feasts. These certainly belonged to the fold of Israel, but the “other sheep” do not. Much has been made of a distinction between the two Greek words meaning “other”, *allos* and *heteros*, *allos* meaning another of the same sort, and *heteros* meaning others of a different sort in classical Greek. Let us put this to the test in the N.T. and compare the parable of the sower in Matthew and Luke. In the following references it is the *same act* that is referred to in both Gospels. Compare Matthew xiii. 5-8 with Luke viii. 6-8:

Matt. xiii. 5-8	Luke viii. 6-8
Some (<i>allos</i>) fell on <i>stony ground</i> .	Some (<i>heterps</i>) fell on <i>rock</i> .
Some (<i>allos</i>) fell on <i>thorns</i> .	Some (<i>heteros</i>) fell on <i>thorns</i> .
Some (<i>allos</i>) fell on <i>good ground</i> .	Some (<i>heteros</i>) fell on <i>good ground</i> .

It is obvious there is no distinction between *allos* and *heteros* here.

In I Cor. xv. 41 we read that one star *differs* from *another* in glory. If the above rule of a difference between *allos* and *heteros* is correct, then here is surely a case for *heteros*, for difference is stressed. But what do we find? *Another* in glory is *allos*, *another* glory of the moon (*allos*), *another* glory of the stars (*allos*).

If we look at the up to date Greek Lexicon, that of Arndt & Gingrich under ‘heteros’, section J, we are told that *heteros* is used *interchangeably with allos*, its equivalent. The truth is that these words are equivalent in the late *koine* Greek of the N.T., no matter what meaning they had in classical Greek.

Professor F. F Bruce comments on John x. 16,

“His sheep who belonged to ‘this fold’ were of Jewish stock, but He had other sheep who must be brought to Him *who never belonged to that fold* and indeed could not be accommodated within it.”

“John here repeats in different language what Jesus said in His discourse, about the good shepherd; that He was to bring His ‘other sheep’ *who did not belong to the Jewish fold, and join them (with their fellow-believers of Jewish birth) into one flock under one shepherd. Once again the Gentile mission is foreshadowed*” (Italics ours: *The Gospel of John*, pp.227 & 251).

At the end of this age there will be a great influx of Gentiles with Israel. Note Zechariah ii. 11, and the phrase “the uttermost parts of the earth” in Acts i. 8, and the gospel of the kingdom preached to *all nations* (Matt. xxiv. 14; Luke xxiv. 47), and the great commission of Matt. xxviii., thus fulfilling the original purpose expressed in Genesis xii. 3 where Abraham’s seed should be a blessing to *all families of the earth*; and Isa. lvi. 7 will be true that “Mine house shall be called a house of prayer *for all people*”. This must be so if God’s kingdom will one day cover the earth as the Scriptures predict.

It is surely true then that the “other sheep” cannot refer to true Israelites who lived outside Palestine. It must refer, as Professor Bruce says, to Gentiles. It is important to get this clear, otherwise wrong deductions will be made which can only lead to wrong interpretation of the passage.

“The reason My Father loves me is that I lay down My life—only to take it up again. No-one takes it from Me, but I lay down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from My Father” (John x. 17, 18).

The Father’s love for the Son is drawn by the *voluntary* offering of the Son for the sin of the world (Heb. ix. 14). There was no compulsion from the Father. The Son willingly gave Himself as a sacrifice for His people’s sins which were laid upon Him, the sinless One (Isa. liii. 5, 6). But this was not done just to exhibit His unselfish love, but also in order to resume His life, for a dead Saviour is useless. He laid down His life *in order to receive it again*, and He had the power to do this that no human being ever possessed (John x. 18). We have noted before that the whole Godhead was involved in the stupendous miracle of Christ’s resurrection; the Father (Gal. i. 1), the Son Himself (in the context we are studying), and the Holy Spirit (I Pet. iii. 18). He had power to lay it down and power to take it again (John x. 18). This reminds us of His statement concerning the temple of His body, “in three days *I will raise it up*” (John ii. 19), and all this was in line with the Father’s will.

“At these words the Jews were again divided. Many of them said, ‘He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to Him?’. But others said, ‘These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’” (John x. 19-21).

Division of opinion about the Lord is a common thing in John’s Gospel (vi. 52, 60, 66; vii. 12; viii. 22; ix. 16; x. 19, 24, 41; xii. 19, 29, 42). This has always been so and is still true today. It is either worshipping Him or stoning Him; there can be no neutral position, as the Saviour has clearly taught.

The Gospel according to MATTHEW.

No.27. xvii. 1 - xviii. 9.
pp. 1 - 5

It is important to get the setting of the Transfiguration. It was evidently night, for Luke tells us that the disciples were “heavy with sleep” (Luke ix. 32 and compare ix. 37). The Lord had ascended a mountain to spend the night in communion with the Father, as was His habit (28).

There, in the nocturnal darkness, as He prayed, a glorious transformation took place which words cannot properly convey, and it must have been all the more overwhelming because of the darkness all around (Luke ix. 29). The Lord’s face became inexpressibly radiant. To a lesser extent the same thing happened to Moses when he communed with God, also on a mountain; his face reflected the glory he had seen, even after he had descended and mingled with the people (Exod. xxxiv. 29-35).

Not only His face, but the Lord’s clothes glistened with light, so that His whole Person was brilliantly radiant. The sight must have been overwhelmingly grand and overpowering. We can well understand that the effect on the three disciples was almost to bemuse them. This was a foretaste of the glory of His second Coming, as Peter has expressed it in his second epistle.

The word “transfiguration” was Tyndale’s, and from this time the word has kept its place in the English versions. He got it from the Latin Vulgate. Others use the word “transform”, and Paul used the same word in Rom. xii. 2. It was a change in the form or appearance of the Lord’s outward Person. This glory must have been inherent in the personality of the Saviour, for He was “God, manifested in the flesh”. It was veiled by His humanity, but here His glory came through and enveloped Him.

“Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus”
(Matthew xvii. 3, N.I.V.).

These men were two great representatives of the Jewish nation and stood for the *Law* and the *Prophets*. Luke not only informs us that they were talking, but also what they were discussing:

“They spoke about His departure, which He was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem” (Luke ix. 31, N.I.V.).

The word “departure” is literally *exodus*. The Lord Jesus was about to accomplish a far mightier exodus than Israel had experienced in Egypt. That was a release from slavery, but the Lord’s mighty work on the cross was the means of deliverance from sin and death, far greater enemies than Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

We must remember that Elijah did not die, but was translated to heaven by God (II.Kings.ii.11) and Moses was evidently raised from the dead, an act that Satan disputed God's right to perform (Jude 9).

In this tremendous experience Peter is again the spokesman:

“Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish I will put up three shelters—one for You, one for Moses and one for Elijah’.” (Matt. xvii. 4, N.I.V.).

We may wonder why Peter uttered these words, but we must remember that he had been awakened from sleep (Luke ix. 32) and was still drowsy. In addition to this the overwhelming glory dazzled him, so it was no wonder that he did not realize fully what he had said (Luke ix. 33; Mark ix. 6).

But it may be that, in spite of all this, he had a reason for his words. It has been suggested that this was the time of the feast of Tabernacles and Peter was saying that they could celebrate it just where they were on the mountain. Or perhaps Peter, realizing that it was night, felt it would be desirable for them to have shelters to stay in. Whatever the real reason, the experience they were undergoing, though tremendous, was intensely wonderful and he wanted it to last. He said, “it is good (*kalos*) for us to be here”. *Kalos* means beautiful or delightful. Had any human being ever had such an uplifting and astounding experience before?

“While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a Voice from the cloud said, ‘This is My Son, Whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!’.” (Matt. xvii. 5, N.I.V.).

Even the cloud that surrounded them reflected the glory that they were beholding, and the Voice spoke the very words which were uttered at the Lord's baptism. They most certainly bore repetition, in fact they could not be repeated too often. “Hear ye Him”, “Listen to Him”! They were words which would have reminded Peter of his recent failure to do this when Christ had spoken about His death. The Voice was the Voice of God and fear now overtook them, for they fell down, terrified (xvii. 6).

The Lord in His compassion, now tenderly touches them and says, “don't be afraid”, and when they looked up, the vision was ended and they were alone with the Lord.

As they descended from the mountain the Lord charged or commanded them to keep silent about what they had seen (9). He knew that it would be completely misunderstood by His enemies. After His resurrection, when His Godhead would be demonstrated, it was allowable.

The disciples had a problem about the promise of Elijah's coming in Mal. iv.

There he is represented as coming before the Messiah with his work of restoration. But the King was here and Elijah had not come. Had the scribes who taught the law been wrong?

“The disciples asked Him, ‘Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?’. Jesus replied, ‘To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands’.” (Matt. xvii. 10-12, N.I.V.).

Three of the disciples had just seen Elijah, but the Messiah had come first and the prophet had not come in person. Yet the Lord insisted that he had come in the purifying and restoring ministry of John the Baptist, thus identifying him with the promise in Malachi. John was Elijah in spirit and ministry as foretold at his birth.

This is another example of how the fulfillment of prophecy can be contingent as regards *time*. It must be fulfilled if a God of truth has spoken it, but the *timing* may depend upon the reactions of those to whom it is addressed. At last the disciples understood (13) and the Lord adds that He is going to be treated in the same way as John. They killed the Baptist as shortly they will the Son of Man.

As they approached the crowd, a demon-possessed boy, who had symptoms like epilepsy, was brought to the Lord. It was evidently a severe case, so much so that the disciples could not heal him. And yet, at their commission, the Lord Jesus had given them the ability to cast out demons (x. 8), so what had gone wrong?

The Lord first addresses the crowd, “O unbelieving perverse generation”. They were a fair representation of the nation at large. The word translated perverse means distorted, twisted in two. How could such ever understand the truth that He was making known? “How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?” He asked. Here was weariness and a small insight given as to the cost of someone Who is utterly holy having to live and have dealings with sinful and perverse men. This is something that we can never fully appreciate. The Lord now casts out the demon and delivers the boy. The disciples want to know why they had failed to do so. They ask the Lord, Who puts His finger on the reason straight away and says “because of your unbelief”. The word means “little faith”. The fault lay in their minds. They were trusting too much in themselves and their own ability, and therefore too little in Christ. How easy it is for self-confidence to come in suddenly and dominate our thoughts! The Bible makes perfectly clear how destructive unbelief can be. It limits God; no wonder then that we read “without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. xi. 6).

The disciples’ faith was so small that it could not be represented by the tiny mustard seed (xvii. 20). Had they had this, they could have removed mountains of difficulties. Nothing would then be impossible and this reminds us of Phil. iv. 13 “I can do everything through Him Who gives me strength” (N.I.V.).

The Lord now tells them again of His approaching death and resurrection (xvii. 22, 23) with the result that they were filled with grief. Not yet had they appreciated or understood the fact of His resurrection and what it involved. This was not fully grasped until after this mighty event.

The Temple Tax.

Half a shekel was payable annually to the Temple by every Jew over twenty years of age. This was based on Exod. xxx. 11-16, originally, for the support of the Tabernacle and then reinstated after the Exile (Neh. x. 32) for the Temple. Christ shows by illustration that the children of kings are exempt from tax (Matt. xvii. 25, 26). As the Son of God He was not compelled to pay tribute to support God's house, but if He had not paid it might have been regarded as disrespect, so, in order to avoid causing misunderstanding, He instructs Peter to fish and he would find the exact amount of money for the Lord and himself in a fish. He Who created all things, for our sakes became poor (II Cor. viii. 9), so much so that He had not enough money to pay this small tax!

Chapter xviii. opens with the question of precedence which had been raised by the disciples on the journey from Caesarea Philippi to Capernaum (Mark ix. 33). Evidently jealousy had been growing in their hearts. They had seen Peter, James and John singled out by the Lord for the experience of the Transfiguration. What a devastating sin jealousy can be! And this is not the only occurrence (Matt. xx. 20-28; Luke xxii. 24).

The Lord's answer was to set a child in their midst and to point out that unless they became child-like (not childish) they would never enter the kingdom of heaven (xviii. 2, 3), let alone have big places in it.

“Therefore whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in My Name welcomes Me”
(Matthew xviii. 4, 5).

True humility is one of the most important Christian virtues. It is the opposite of pride and self-sufficiency and is the basic mental attitude of the worthy walk of the believer detailed in Eph. iv.-vi.—(note iv. 2). The reception of such a character “on the basis of My Name”, means that he is like the Lord Jesus “meek and lowly of heart”, with a sense of dependence upon a parent's wisdom and love.

The saying about humbling oneself must have been repeated by the Lord many times (see Matt. xxiii. 12). Surely this is one of the most difficult things to do, for it goes right against human nature with its tendency to exalt self. Yet it is absolutely fundamental to a life that is fruitful and well-pleasing to the Lord. Such a life will take care to avoid being a stumbling block to others—especially the young (xviii. 6-8).

The language that follows is metaphorical, but there is no doubt as to its meaning. If we have to make a choice, it is better to sacrifice important elements of our being, than be guilty of conduct that would incur the loss of the whole. The *hand* speaks of *doing* and *making*. The *foot* speaks of *movement* and *walking*. The *eye* speaks of *seeing* and *regarding*. If any or all of these things cause us to violate the standards of the holy Scriptures, they must be given up. The decision must rest with ourselves; no one can decide for us, nor can we adopt the attitude that we cannot help our failures, for we are not helpless machines. God's grace and strength are always at our disposal.

**No.28. xviii. 10 - xix. 8.
pp. 21 - 25**

The Lord Jesus continues His object lesson with the little child by saying:

“See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father in heaven” (Matt. xviii. 10, N.I.V.).

It is a Scriptural fact that angelic beings have been placed by God over nations (Daniel x. 13; xii. 1) and evidently Satan has his spiritual emissaries in opposition, as this chapter reveals. Is it true to say, from Matt. xviii., that children have their guardian angels? This could be deduced from the Lord’s words and the Jews certainly believed in guardian angels. What is clear is that God is concerned about children in their helplessness and also child-like believers.

Verse 11 is omitted by several important authorities. It occurs in Luke xix. 10 and seems to have been inserted in Matthew by a copyist to make an introduction to the parable of the lost sheep which follows (Matt. xviii. 12-14). This reveals that every single sheep is known to the Lord. If only one strays, He is greatly concerned and will make every effort to recover it and will rejoice when it is restored. Individual believers are not lost in a crowd where God is concerned and one is amazed how He knows and cares for each one individually.

The way God deals with the erring sheep leads on to the way that a person should deal with his erring brother:

“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector” (15-17, N.I.V.).

This advice is very necessary, for it is a sad experience that believers do disagree, often with disastrous results. The first thing that the wronged person should do is to meet the offender privately and discuss the matter. Talking about him behind his back is useless. The advice given by the apostle Paul is much to the point here (Gal. vi. 1). The next step is to take others as witnesses if the private meeting is without result, and if this does not solve the matter then the appeal is to the “church”.

We ask the reader to turn back to the exposition of chapter xvi. regarding the word “church”. It certainly cannot mean the Gentile church of today which was not in existence, but refers to the synagogue or local court (see Acts xix. 39).

The conclusion, given by the Lord Jesus, is given in verse 18. The grammatical construction is the same as in xvi. 19 and the reader is again referred back to this verse and its rendering of the future perfect passive periphrastic. We give the rendering of *The Amplified Version*:

“Truly, I tell you, whatever you forbid and declare to be improper and unlawful on earth must be what is already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit and declare proper and lawful on earth must be already permitted in heaven.”

C. B. Williams translates this verse:

“I solemnly say to you, whatever you forbid on earth must be already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth must be already permitted in heaven.”

Robert Young gives it literally:

“Verily I say to you, whatever things ye may bind upon the earth shall be having been bound in the heaven, and whatever things ye may loose on the earth shall be having been loosed in heaven.”

These translations are true to the original Greek and show clearly that believers can only do what *God has already determined shall be done*. Their action is contingent upon God’s will. He is certainly not waiting in heaven to see what believers on earth decide to do before He ratifies their action. This would grossly over-emphasize the importance of human beings and make almighty God subservient to them and is entirely contrary to the revelation of holy Scripture.

Unfortunately, from time to time, God’s people on earth have failed to carry out God’s decrees and have authorized what He has not willed. Needless to say, such activity is null and void so far as God is concerned. He will carry out on the earth what He has determined and not all the forces of Satan and men can finally stop it, although they may hinder its realization for a while. Matt. xviii. 18 declares that God’s people can only ratify what God has already purposed. The faulty rendering of the A.V. and other versions have only led to priestcraft and bondage to men.

The Lord Jesus goes on to declare:

“Again, I tell you, that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in My Name, there am I with them” (xviii. 19, 20, N.I.V.).

These two verses must not be separated; otherwise truth will be jeopardized. Verse.19 does not give an invitation to ask anything we choose or want with the assurance that we shall receive it. If this was so, it would mean that two people could demand anything from God, even if it was contrary to His will, whereas I John v. 14 declares:

“And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask *anything according to His will*, He heareth us”,

and as the holy Scripture cannot contradict Scripture, Matt. xviii. 19, 20 must be interpreted with this in mind. There are three essentials in these verses, (1) the presence of Christ; (2) full agreement among those gathered, and (3) the requests must be “in My Name”.

How good it is to realize that God’s blessing is not regulated by numbers! We may be impressed by large gatherings but the Lord has respect to the twos and threes, and if they fulfil the conditions of these verses they can accomplish more than big meetings which are not so regulated. The word “agree” *sumphonesosin* gives us our word “symphony”, and when we have two or three gathered in the Name of Christ with Him presiding and all things subject to His will, we have “symphonic prayer” which will most certainly be answered. The words “in My Name” are parallel with I John v. 14 “according to His will”, for how can one sincerely *ask in the Name of Christ* for things which are *not* “according to His will”?

There now follows Peter’s question concerning forgiveness of others:

“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?’. Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy -- seven times’.” (xviii. 21, 22, N.I.V.).

Peter possibly thought he was being magnanimous in saying seven times, as the Jewish rule was three times and this was based on Amos i. 6. But the Lord’s reply meant more than expressed by 490 times; it meant unlimited forgiveness, and to enforce this Christ gave the parable of the unmerciful servant (xviii. 23-35). This occupies quite a long passage of Scripture and the reader is asked to consider it carefully.

Actually it could occur at any time in history. A man owed a very large sum of money to his king, and as he could not pay the king ordered that he, his wife, children and property should be sold to repay the debt. The man pleaded for mercy and time to pay, and the king took pity on him, generously cancelled the debt and let him go.

However, he met someone who owed him quite a trifling sum of money and instead of giving him the same generous treatment that he had experienced, he handled him roughly, demanded immediate payment and on finding that the debtor could not repay at once, had him thrown into prison.

His mean and unmerciful conduct came to the ears of the king who sent for him and said:

“ ‘You wicked servant. I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow-servant just as I had on you?’ . In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. *‘This is how My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart’.*” (xviii. 32-35, N.I.V.).

We must remember that this parable was addressed to Peter and the Twelve who were saved men, and the solemn conclusion of the last verse applied to them as much as the

rest of the parable. But the Lord was not teaching new truth, for this was embodied in the Sermon on the Mount (v. 23-26; vi. 14, 15), where He taught that an unforgiving spirit would lead to exclusion from the kingdom when set up. We have seen that this Gospel revolves around the conditions for entry into the kingdom of heaven or being shut out of it.

When we come to the later revelation concerning the Body of Christ, we are assured that each member has complete forgiveness by God, “having forgiven you *all* trespasses” (Col. ii. 13), and Eph. iv. 31, 32 teaches:

“Let *all* bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, *forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.*”

Here we are not asked to forgive because otherwise we shall forfeit God’s forgiveness, but rather to forgive because we already have complete forgiveness by God. If an unforgiving spirit is cherished by any member of the Body of Christ, then this is “walking after the flesh”, the sinful old nature that we all possess, and no one can do this with God’s approval. Loss is bound to occur and the prize or reward is endangered.

The next section of Matthew’s Gospel (chapter xix.) deals with the knotty question of divorce. The Pharisees again attempt to trip up the Lord Jesus by asking Him if it was lawful to divorce a wife for any and every reason (xix. 3). He refers back to the creation of Adam and Eve and the fact that God had joined them together and it was not for any man to separate them (6). They replied by quoting Moses’ permission to divorce. The Lord answered:

“Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery” (xix. 8, 9, N.I.V.).

This agrees with His teaching in v. 31. At this time there was a dispute between two theological schools over the meaning of Deut. xxiv. 1. The school of Shammai took the strict and unpopular view of divorce for adultery alone, while the school of Hillel took the liberal and popular view of easy divorce for practically any reason real or imagined by the man. It is clear that the Lord agreed with the Shammai school and there is no doubt that, at the beginning, God’s will for marriage was that it should be permanent, for life. He made one man and one woman, each for the other. He did not create more women than men so as to provide for divorce. But the weakness of the flesh spoils God’s original purpose and we cannot believe that Moses who was faithful to God, would have been allowed to have modified it without the Lord’s permission. The law originated from God, not Moses, and breaking the law in any particular was counted as disobedience to God, not Moses.

No.29. xix. 9 - 29.
pp. 41 - 45

It is clear then that, in Matthew's account, the Lord Jesus allowed divorce for adultery, although this sank below the standard of marriage that God had in view at creation. There is a group of scholars who deny the genuineness of this exception, which is recorded by Matthew alone. Thus, Dr. A. Plummer says "it is improbable that Jesus taught this; and we suspect that 'except for fornication' and 'for every cause' are insertions made either by the Evangelist or the authority which he is using". Dr.Plummer asserts that the truth is only to be found in Mark and Luke's account. Apart from the blow this gives to verbal inspiration, how do Dr. Plummer and his friends know for certain that Matthew is merely stating his opinion of what Christ taught? Professor A. T. Robertson says that they are unwilling to accept Matthew's report because it disagrees with their views on the subject of divorce.

We believe that Matthew's Gospel is part of the inspired Word of God equally with the other Evangelists.

If the above criticism is true, one might just as well omit the remarkable passage that follows on celibacy, because Mark and Luke do not contain it! This is certainly an exception to the general rule about marriage and the Lord goes so far as to say "not everyone can accept this word (teaching), but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept this" (xix. 11, 12, N.I.V.). John the Baptist, the apostle Paul and others remained single because they judged that they could render better service to the Lord without the ties and obligations of marriage. Each one must seek the Lord's will in this matter and make one's own decision apart from the opinion of others.

The question of divorce is a pressing problem when one considers that it has been estimated that every third marriage in Great Britain today ends in divorce. This is an appalling situation, utterly disastrous for children and the family life, and this is what happens when men slip away from the standards that God has given. Few seem to care or realize that if they are being married in a place of worship, they are making solemn vows to God involving a life-long union. Eccles. v. 4, 5 reads:

"When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfil your vows. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfil it" (N.I.V.).

"If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin" (Deut. xxiii. 21, N.I.V.).

It is obvious then from the law of God given through Moses, that vows are taken very seriously by the Lord. It is therefore incumbent upon every believer who contemplates

marriage to remember this. Marriage is not only a time of great joy, but great responsibility too and this must never be forgotten.

As regards remarriage after divorce, Christ allows remarriage of the innocent party, but not of the guilty one (Luke xvi. 18). Modern divorce laws do not square with His teaching and believers must decide whether they are going to follow man-made conceptions and rules.

There follows then the account of the Lord blessing little children. Such were brought to Christ “for Him to place His hands on them and pray for them” (Matt. xix. 13). There can be no doubt that the Lord loved young children and this is shown by the fact that, as Mark states, He was indignant when the disciples rebuked those who brought them to Himself (Mark x. 14). Matthew’s account reads:

“Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these’. When He had placed His hands on them, He went on from there” (Matt. xix. 14, 15, N.I.V.).

“Stop hindering them”, such is the force of *me* with the present imperative. Christ had already stressed the child-like attitude of mind of those who were concerned to enter the kingdom of heaven (xviii. 3).

The Evangelist now relates His encounter with the rich young man who asked Him, “Teacher, what good thing must I *do* to get eternal life?” (xix. 16, N.I.V.). In the account of Mark and Luke the word ‘inherit’ is used by the young man. The Lord’s answer, after correcting his idea of being “good”, was “If you want to *enter* life, obey the commandments” (17). The young man was able to say after the Lord had specified what He meant by “commandments”, “all these I have kept”. Some have thought that this was very boastful, but the Lord did not correct him, because it was evidently true. After making this reply, Mark tells us that, “Jesus beholding him, *loved* him and said, ‘one thing thou lackest’”. The Lord certainly would not have loved him had he been telling lies. There was yet something *he must do* in order to enter into life.

We have seen in the earlier chapters of Matthew that one of the key-words is *enter*—those who can *enter the kingdom* and those who are shut out. It is very important to recognize that, in the Synoptic Gospels, entering into life and entering the kingdom are parallel. It is the life in the great Messianic kingdom, and the conditions are laid down for *believers*, not unbelievers, and are an explanation of *reward* for faithful service for those already saved. Hence the continual stress on *works* and not faith alone.

The same truth is emphasized to the lawyer who asked a question similar to that put by the young man, “Master, what shall I *do* to inherit eternal life?”. The Lord immediately refers him to the law of Moses—“What is written in the law?” (Luke x. 25, 26). The lawyer quotes from the ten commandments and Christ’s reply is “*Thou hast answered right: this do and thou shalt live*” (28).

The same teaching is given to the Twelve after they had asked the Lord what they would receive after faithfully following Him. His reply was:

“I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me (and the Lord had previously made clear what this would cost in suffering and taking up the cross) will also sit on *twelve thrones* judging the *twelve tribes of Israel*. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields *for My sake* will receive a hundred times as much *and will inherit eternal life*” (Matt. xix. 28, 29, N.I.V.).

Here again inheriting eternal life is connected with *works*.

In the same way when we come to the judgment of the living nations at the Second Advent of Christ recorded in chapter xxv., those entertaining eternal life are connected with *actions*, not faith alone. They had fed, clothed, attended to the Lord in sickness, although they had no consciousness of actually doing these things with the Lord in view. It is such who inherit eternal life in Matthew’s Gospel.

Nothing is clearer than eternal life is parallel to entering the kingdom when set up by the Lord in the future, and this *is connected with faithful service*. Eternal life in Matthew, Mark and Luke, is linked with *doing, keeping, forsaking and following the Lord*.

This makes problems, of course, because it does not agree with the revelation given later connected with the Body of Christ, as made known in Paul’s ministry. Once we see the distinction between the *earthly* phase of God’s kingdom purpose where redeemed Israel is in the centre, and the *heavenly* phase of that same kingdom purpose which is connected with the Body of Christ, the problems vanish. It is a question of “distinguishing the things that differ” (Phil. i. 10 margin). We must also recognize that entering the kingdom is in the nature of *reward* as we have seen and as the Sermon on the Mount clearly teaches, and rewards can be won or they can be lost by actions, obedience, or disobedience.

One thing that can militate against faithful response to the Lord’s claims is money, as the young man found, whom we have been considering. “If you want to be mature”, the Lord told him, “go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure (reward) in heaven. Then come, follow Me” (Matt. xix. 21). The Lord was touching a vital point with him, for he was rich (22). He had progressed so far, but here was one thing that was blocking the way, as it has been doing ever since, that is, the love of money. There is nothing wrong with money. It is the fascination of money that grips the human mind and controls it that is the danger. It becomes the most important thing in life and therefore an idol; consequently the Scripture warns us that it is the *love* of money which is dangerous, for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. “Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with griefs” (I.Tim.vi.10, N.I.V.), and in the context we are studying, the Lord Jesus stated:

“I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to *enter the kingdom of God*” (Matt. xix. 23, 24, N.I.V.).

Christ had already warned that it was impossible to serve God and mammon (riches) at the same time (vi. 24), and this warning was never more needed than today, when the principal aim of the average life appears to get more and more money, which never brings complete satisfaction, no matter how much is acquired. It is a delusion that controls and enslaves millions.

There is no need to interpret the “camel” and the “needle’s eye” other than literally. In order to emphasize His point, the Lord Jesus is contrasting the largest beast of burden in Palestine with the smallest aperture known at that time. The explanation that the eye of the needle represents a small door in a city gate is a guess, and no ancient expositor ever adopts this method of explanation. The love of money grips the human mind like a vice, but God can break it, for with Him all things are possible (xix. 26), and He had done it in Matthew’s case and also in that of Zacchaeus (Luke xix. 1-10).

After the Lord’s dealing with the young man and His statement as to what he must give up (his riches), Peter naturally thinks that he and the other disciples had made sacrifices for the Lord. How would they fare? (Matt. xix. 27). The Lord gives His tremendous reply in verses 28, 29 which we have already quoted.

It is obvious from this that no one who voluntarily gives things up for Christ’s sake will finally lose. God will not be a debtor to anyone and all such will be gloriously rewarded. This is true for all time, and those who attempt to eliminate reward from God’s dealing with His children, either earthly or heavenly, are going against Scripture and the *righteousness* of God, for it is the *righteous* Judge Who awards the *crown* at the end (II Tim. iv. 8), and we are wise if we do not forget this.

**No.30. xix. 30 - xxi. 17.
pp. 66 - 70**

The Parable of the workers in the Vineyard.

This parable is linked with the last verse of the previous chapter. It commences with the word “for”. The last verse reads:

“But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first. For the kingdom of heaven is like” (Matt. xix. 30 and xx. 1, N.I.V.).

This last verse is somewhat enigmatic and needs the parable to explain it. If we judge by ordinary human standards a number of difficulties may appear. The parable is contained in verses 1-16 and the reader should carefully study them. Workers are engaged at different times during the day, early in the morning and again at the 6th, 9th and 11th hour. The actual amount to be paid for the day’s work was made with the first ones only, namely a denarius (verse 2) which was the common wage for a day labourer at

that time, and it would seem that they would have been satisfied with this had it not been for the graciousness shown to the last comers.

God keeps His promise to those who serve Him. He is the sole judge of what each labourer ought to receive. No one receives less than had been promised and some receive more, though in man's eyes this seems to be unfair. At the time of payment only those with whom an agreement had been made and kept found fault. If they had been paid and sent away there would have been no grumbling. The master was the sole judge of what the work of the others was worth to him. As the day wore on, time was precious and their labour became more and more valuable, and possibly they worked harder because of this. At the end of the day they received the same pay (a denarius) as the early workers and this caused these people to grumble, but the master's reply to them was:

“I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am *generous*? So the last will be first and the first will be last” (xx. 14-16, N.I.V.).

This reminds one of the argument of the apostle Paul in Rom. ix. 18-21, where the natural mind questions the fairness of God's dealings. In spite of all our feelings, we can be sure of one thing—the absolute rightness and fairness of a righteous and holy God. If we adopt the false system of “measuring ourselves by ourselves”, and adopting human standards of reckoning, we shall always have problems with the ways of God. God is not only a God of fairness and justice, but He is generous too and knows not only the amount of work done, but the difficulties and problems of each worker behind the scenes, and His verdict allows for this.

In verse 17, on His way to Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus takes the Twelve aside and again makes an effort to get them to understand the fact of the cross and resurrection that lay ahead. This was the fourth time He had referred to it:

“Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, ‘We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn Him to death and will turn Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day He will be raised to life!’.”

Then follows the account of the mother of Zebedee's sons, who in her ambition for her children wanted them to have the best places in the Kingdom. This is a repetition of the same spirit shown by the disciples earlier.

She asked the Lord:

“Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right (hand) and the other at your left in your kingdom” (xx. 21, N.I.V.).

They had already been promised that they would eventually sit on thrones and rule the tribes of Israel, but this apparently was not enough. They still had not realized that the sufferings and death which the Messiah had predicted for Himself were the *road* to the

Kingdom. He must *suffer* in order to reign. Still less did they understand that those who were to reign with Him must be ready to *suffer with Him*. No wonder He replied:

“You don’t know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?”
“We can”, they answered (xx. 22, N.I.V.).

Little did they realize what this cup of suffering involved. They would certainly drink of it, the Lord affirmed. In James’s case it happened when he was put to death by Herod Agrippa (Acts xii. 2). In John’s it was fulfilled in various ways: imprisonment (Acts iv. 3; v. 18), beating (v. 40), and possibly exile (Rev. i. 9). John evidently died a natural death in his old age:

“There is no sufficient evidence to cast serious doubt on the universal tradition that John died peacefully at Ephesus in extreme old age. The attribution of Papias of the statement that John and James were killed by the Jews rests on very slender authority”
(*The Historical Character of St. John’s Gospel* by J. Armitage Robinson).

The other disciples were indignant with James and John when they learned of their ambitious request, and once more the Lord enforces His teaching concerning real humility. *Those who desire to rule must first learn to serve*. This is a complete reversal of the common idea concerning greatness and authority both then and now. The Lord said:

“. . . . whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (xx. 26-28, N.I.V.).

As one studies the Word of God it is a constant wonderment to realize that He Who is God almighty stoops to such humility. It is important to know that the word “ransom” (*lutron*) was used in contemporary literature as the price paid for a slave who was then set free by the one who bought him. The word “for” (“for many”) is *anti*, which has the meaning of exchange. The Lord Jesus gave His own life as the price of freedom for the slaves of sin. There are those who seek to minimize the thought of a substitutionary death for sinners by pointing out that the word ransom only occurs here and in the corresponding passage in Mark x. 45. But as Professor A. T. Robertson says, this is an easy way of trying to get rid of passages that contradict one’s theological opinions. Christ knew the fullness of what He was saying and certainly meant what He said. The central fact of redemption is that the penalty for sin has been paid, not by the believer who is a sinner, but by the Lord Jesus in his place and stead (Isa. liii. 5, 6).

We do not know the total number of the redeemed, but it must be a large one otherwise the word “many” would not have been used.

The final verses of chapter xx. deal with the healing of the two blind men which is recorded in the three Synoptic Gospels. In some respects the accounts differ. Mark and Luke have one blind man; Matthew has two. Matthew and Mark place the miracle when Christ was leaving Jericho; Luke has it when the Lord was approaching the city. The unbelieving mind loves to point out these seeming discrepancies, but when we know all

the facts we find that there are no discrepancies at all. It is clear that there was no copying one another.

The main city of Roman Jericho (the remains of which have been discovered) was occupied by poorer Jews, and lay about a mile east of Herod's winter headquarters, also called Jericho. This contained the palace, fortress and houses of Herod's wealthy friends. The miracle evidently took place between the two Jerichos, hence the approaching and departing depends upon which town one is referring to, and of the two men, one was more prominent than the other (Bartimaeus, Mark x. 46) and there is no reason why Mark and Luke should not concentrate on one of them.

They were obviously Israelites, for they addressed Christ as the Son of David, thus recognizing His Messiahship. The Lord graciously healed them at a touch.

The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem.

With chapter xxi. we come to a crisis point in this Gospel and it centres around the holy city, Jerusalem. Verse 1 tells us that they approached the city and came to Bethpage on the Mount of Olives. Bethpage means "house of figs". We know little of this place, for it is not mentioned in the O.T. or the Apocrypha and only occurs in the first three Gospels. It apparently lay on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives or at its foot, and was larger than Bethany.

The Passover was at hand and there would be immense numbers of pilgrims that had come to Jerusalem for the Feast. In addition to this, many of the dispersed Jews living abroad would be present too. The Lord's ministry had been attracting great crowds. In Matt. xix. 2 we are told that "great multitudes followed Him". Luke tells us that "the crowds increased" (xi. 29), and in xii. 1 "many thousands had gathered so that they were trampling on one another" and "large crowds were traveling with Jesus" (xiv. 25), and "a large crowd followed Him" (Matt. xx. 29). Thus the overruling of God saw to it that a large and important section of the chosen nation was assembled at Jerusalem to witness the final events of Messiah's ministry, which first of all consisted of the regal entry of the Messiah into the capital city as the King of Israel.

The great time of final decision had now come for this favoured people. The leaders had already rejected Him but now the nation had to make up its mind either to accept or reject Him as their King.

The Lord Jesus gives instructions to two disciples to go to the nearby village where they would find a donkey with her colt and the owner would be willing to part with them (xxi. 1-3). The possibility was that this person had already been blessed under Christ's ministry, and so would raise no objection. The Evangelist tells us that this fulfilled the prophecy of Zech. ix. 9:

"Say to the Daughter of Zion,
 'See, *your King comes to you,*
gentle and riding on a donkey,
 on a colt, the foal of a donkey'." (xxi. 4, 5, N.I.V.).

Up to this time the Lord had enjoined silence upon His followers concerning His claims as Messiah. Now He declares “if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out” (Luke xix. 40). The time of official presentation had arrived. Thus occurred the most outstanding day of Israel’s history, when the Lord came in triumph to the capital city of Jerusalem, thus literally fulfilling Zechariah’s prophecy.

The people’s actions showed their awareness of the occasion: “A very great multitude spread their garments in the way” (Matt. xxi. 8), thus forming a carpet, an act reserved only for those of the highest rank (cp. II Kings ix. 13). In addition to this they strewed His path with palm branches (John xii. 13), a demonstration in the East to welcome a king or conqueror.

Their joyous cries are recorded by each of the Evangelists. “Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Mark xi. 10). “Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest” (Luke xix. 38). “Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord” (John xii. 13). These represent the various cries of the crowd. The whole of Jerusalem was stirred (literally “agitated”) (Matt. xxi. 10 and 11), but how deeply did they feel? The following days were to make that clear.

The Lord now enters the Temple precincts and drives out the money changers and dove sellers who had commercialized the place. The Temple was the house of God which was being defiled. Christ described them as having made it a “den of robbers” (xxi. 13). He referred to Isa. lvi. 7 which teaches that God’s house was one of prayer, not a place of cheap business practices.

The blind and infirm still came to Him and in each case they were healed. This, together with the joyous shouts of the children in the Temple area, stirred up the jealousy and fear of the religious leaders. They remonstrated with the Lord and His answer to them was to quote from Psa. viii. 2, “from the lips of children and infants You have ordained praise” (N.I.V.), which was a stinging rebuke to those who professed to know and teach the O.T. Scriptures.

No.31. xxi. 18 - xxii. 14.
pp. 85 - 91

Christ now leaves the Temple and the city and passes the night at Bethany (xxi. 17). Bethany was the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, and possibly He stayed with them. Early in the morning He returns to the city, and feeling hungry, He goes to a fig tree on the side of the road, but instead of figs He found nothing but leaves (xxi. 18, 19).

“Then He said to it, ‘May you never bear fruit again!’. Immediately the tree withered”
(xxi. 19, N.I.V.).

Mark, in his account, adds that “the time of figs was not yet” (Mark xi. 13 A.V.), in which case it seems unreasonable for the Lord to have expected fruit on it. But we should know that the Palestinian fig tree normally produces fruit *before* the leaves. The main fig crop was early autumn, but as this tree had leaves on it, there should have been figs as well as the leaves, but the Lord Jesus found none there. The tree was a deceiver and a hypocrite, so to speak. How well this typified the “evil and adulterous generation” of Israel to whom the Lord came. There was plenty of religious show (leaves), but no fruit (sincere faith in Him and His teaching). They would certainly not “enter the kingdom of heaven”. And so the fig tree immediately withered away, and this caused amazement among the disciples (xxi. 20).

The Lord Jesus uses this to stress the efficacy of prayer which He had stressed at other times. Verses 21 and 22 must be interpreted with the *whole* of His teaching on this most important subject. It is easy to wrest these verses from their context and make them mean that *anything* we ask the Lord will be granted. God is far too wise to act in this way. How often we may be requesting things that will harm us, but for the moment we do not realize this!

The verses that follow record another occasion when the leaders tried to trap the Lord, like the question about tribute:

“Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while He was teaching, the chief priests and elders of the people came to Him. ‘By what authority are you doing these things?’ they asked. ‘And who gave you this authority?’” (xxi. 23, N.I.V.).

The Lord counters this by asking a question Himself, and this would lead to an answer to their query:

“Jesus replied, ‘I will also ask you one question. If you answer Me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things.’” (xxi. 24, N.I.V.).

John’s repentance baptism represented his position as the forerunner of the Messiah. The people had hailed John as a prophet (26). This was known to the Sanhedrin and these leaders should have decided by now whether he was a true prophet or not. If he was a prophet (and they did not dare to say he was not, for had they done so the people

would have stoned them, Luke xx. 6); in that case there was no doubt as to the Lord's authority, for John, as a prophet, had declared Him to be the Messiah.

They were on the horns of a dilemma. If they once admitted that John was a prophet, then Christ would say "why didn't you believe him?" (25). And if the Baptist's proclamation of Him did not convince them, what effect would His own assertion have?

There was only one answer they could make to the Lord's query, namely "we don't know" (27), which was a disgrace after all the evidence that John had given them. The Lord Jesus dismisses them with the words "neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things" (27).

The Gospel of Mark follows this with one parable, that of the wicked husbandmen. Matthew gives us another triplet of parables (xxi. 28, 33; xxii. 1). These were also addressed to the Pharisees who had just criticized Him. The first is the parable of the two sons. One refused to obey his father's order to go and work in the vineyard. Afterwards he changed his mind and went. The second son had the same charge and said he was willing, but he did not go. Which son did what his father wanted? the Lord asked, and the leaders were forced to answer, "the first son" (xxi. 28-31).

This young fellow became sorry for his refusal to obey his father and changed his mind and became obedient. The A.V. says he repented and went. But the Greek verb is *metamelomai*, to be sorry, whereas "repent" is *metanoeo*. The two words should be distinguished, as in the English repentance and penitence. The former word means in the Greek a change of mind, and the latter, sorrow or penitence. The apostle Paul makes this difference in II Cor. xii. 9 between these words. Mere sorrow is not a change of mind (repentance). It can be just remorse as it was in the case of Judas Iscariot.

The Lord Jesus applies the meaning of the parable to the religious leaders:

"Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him'." (xxi. 31, 32, N.I.V.).

This is a reversal of human judgment. Not only the Pharisees, but Jewish opinion generally would have believed that the prospects of this sort of people entering the kingdom of heaven were of the best, while those of the toll collectors and harlots were infinitesimal. Truly the first are last and the last first, as the Lord asserted. The latter made no profession of religion, but accepted John's teaching and were entering the kingdom, whereas the leaders refused and paid no heed to the Baptist's instruction, and were being shut out.

Without pause, the Lord Jesus puts to them the parable of the wicked tenants of the vineyard. The conduct of these husbandmen towards the householder's servants portrays the behaviour of the nation of Israel and their religious leaders towards the prophets and now toward Christ.

In the O.T. Israel is often spoken of as a vineyard (Isa.v.1-7; Jer.ii.21; Ezek.xv.1-6; xix. 10-14; Hosea x. 1), so the imagery would be understood. The treatment that the prophets received is made clear in I Kings xix. 10; xxii. 24; II Chron. xxiv. 21; Jeremiah xx. 1, 2; xxxvii. 15; xxxviii. 6, etc. The uniform hostility of the kings, priests and people to the Prophets is one of the remarkable features in the history of Israel. And now, in the presence of their Messiah and King, they are no better than their fathers. The climax is reached when they take the Son, throw Him out of the vineyard and kill Him.

What will the owner of the vineyard do to these wicked tenants, the parable asks? The Pharisees are bound to say that they would be destroyed and the vineyard let to others, and in saying this they uttered their own condemnation. The Lord Jesus reinforces this by saying:

“Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed” (xxi. 42-44, N.I.V.).

The imagery is suddenly changed from the vineyard of Isa. v. to the builders of Psalm cxviii. 22 who rejected the foundation stone. The Lord Jesus is pictured by the stone in three different ways. (1) To Israel to whom He came, He was a stumbling stone and rock of offence (Rom. ix. 32, 33). Instead of being the mighty Conqueror Who would free them from the domination of Rome, He came as a lowly Servant Who was willing to be crucified (I Cor. i. 23) and as such was a stumbling-block to the Jew. (2) In spite of this, He was the foundation stone on which the whole of God’s redemptive plan for His kingdom rests (Acts iv. 11; I Pet. ii. 4, 5) and (3) He is yet to be the great smiting stone portrayed by Daniel which smashes the Gentile world-power and brings in His kingdom world-wide (Dan. ii. 34). This occurs at His Second Advent.

But the Lord warns the murderous religious leaders that the kingdom will be taken from them and given to those who do produce fruit. We must not make the mistake here that the Lord is teaching that the *whole* of Israel is now rejected and have lost their place in the great kingdom purpose. Still less that Gentile nations or the church will now take Israel’s place. The Lord Jesus is still talking *to the rejecting Pharisees* and telling them once more that they will not have a place in the kingdom of heaven.

However, a faithful remnant has responded, and grows during the period that follows which is covered by the Acts. They are definitely given the title of “a remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom. xi. 5). At the same time we are reminded in Rom. xi. 1, 2 that God had *not* cast away His people. He had already started to build a new nation from the faithful remnant of Jewish believers and with the Abrahamic promise in view Gentile believers were being added. And just as Israel was definitely chosen by God—they were an elect people—so this faithful remnant is called “the elect” (Rom. xi. 5-7). Thus God could reject a “wicked and adulterous *generation*” of Jews, without breaking His promise to Abraham of an eternal posterity through Isaac (Rom. ix. 6, 7).

In Matt. xxi. 45, 46, the Evangelist informs us that the chief priests and Pharisees recognized that these parables were directed to them. They looked for a way to arrest the Lord, but dared not do so, because they feared the reaction of the people (45, 46) who regarded Him as a prophet. In spite of this, Christ continues to speak to them in parables (xxii. 1) and gives them the story of the marriage of the King's Son (xxii. 1-4). A king had prepared a wedding banquet for his son and sent his servants out to those who had invited, telling them to come, but they refused. In spite of this, the king graciously sends out more servants and renews the invitation to these people. But they were rude and rebellious and again rejected the royal invitation to the wedding. Not only this, but they seized the king's servants, ill-treated and killed them.

This enraged the king, who sent his army, destroyed the murderers, and burnt up their city (xxii. 7).

Up to this point the interpretation is clear. The two invitations correspond to (1) the ministries of John the Baptist and Christ, who announced the imminence of the kingdom, and (2) the ministry of the twelve and Paul to the same people in the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles. The destruction of the city was fulfilled in the destruction and burning of Jerusalem in 70A.D. Between the two invitations comes Calvary and we notice the sacrificial element in the story in verse 4, "the fatlings and the cattle have been killed and everything is ready (for the wedding banquet)".

But the king is still determined to invite others to the marriage feast, so his servants are sent out into the streets to gather others into the dining hall.

Where is this to be placed in the interpretation? At least it must be *future* to 70A.D., which brings us to this present age which has already lasted nearly 2,000 years. The people who are gathered in are from the streets of the city (Jerusalem) and therefore must be primarily Israelites as the first group were.

When the revelation of the N.T. does not give minute details, it is unwise to dogmatize, and in any case it is a mistake to try to find doctrinal significance in every small detail of a parable. Many fanciful ideas arise when this is done. Parables have a main point to emphasize. In the verses that follow we find the king enters to meet the guests, but immediately notices a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes.

The story does not tell us whether the king supplied these to the guests, or whether they were expected to provide and use them. The king confronts the person who was evidently an intruder. He was speechless and the king orders him to be bound and cast outside into the darkness, and the story ends "for many are invited, but few are elected" (xxii. 14).

We now have to ask ourselves what the wedding garment represents? Obviously it must be something of great importance, for without it, it was impossible to partake of the royal wedding feast. There have been many guesses by expositors, but we must have solid Scriptural basis for our view of the meaning. Surely the last verse of the parable

gives us a clue. After stating the intense disappointment and possibly impotent rage of those outside who are shut out (“weeping and gnashing of teeth”) we read “FOR many are invited, *but few elected*”. Election is the key here and decides whether a person shall be admitted or excluded, and this must be what the wedding garment represents, just as fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints (overcomers) in Rev. xix. 8.

Whether we like the doctrine of election or not, there can be no doubt that it ramifies right throughout the purpose of God. It is a great mistake to limit it to salvation as many Calvinists have done. God has a great plan which will surely be fulfilled, and He has decreed *how it shall be carried out and who will be His instruments in doing so*. The Lord is dealing here with the faithful “remnant according to the *election* of grace” (Romans xi. 5).

No.32. xxii. 15 - xxiii. 32.
pp. 113 - 117

Yet again Christ’s enemies, the Pharisees and Herodians, attempt to entrap Him. Although these two groups had little in common, they had united in their opposition to the Lord. After flattering Him by calling Him a man of integrity, who is not influenced by others, they say:

“Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

The Lord, Who could read their inmost thoughts as well as their outward words and actions, knew of their evil intent and replied:

“ ‘Show Me the coin used for paying the tax.’ They brought Him a denarius, and He asked them, ‘whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?’ “Caesar’s”, they replied. Then He said to them, ‘Give unto Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.’” (xxii. 17-21, N.I.V.).

The matchless wisdom of the Lord was too much for His opponents. They were amazed and could only leave Him and go their way. But the day had not finished before another group tried to ensnare Him. This time it was the rationalists, the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection. They presented to Him the hypothetical case of a man who having six brothers who all in turn married his widow, according to the law of the O.T. “At the resurrection whose wife will she be?”, they asked.

The Lord Jesus replied:

“You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living. When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching” (xxii. 29-33, N.I.V.).

In the first sentence of His reply, Christ puts his finger on the cause of the opposer's ignorance. "You are in error *because you do not know the Scriptures*, or the power of God." This is still the chief cause of ignorance and declension from Christian standards today. Few, even among professing Christians, seriously study the Word of God and when one considers the lack of expository teaching in the pulpits, the Bible is largely an unknown Book.

When will people learn that if they turn away from this Book of God, they can never know God or His truth? Being religious is no substitute for a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. If this book could be blotted out, Christianity would not exist, for a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ would be impossible.

All sorts of ideas are proposed to remedy the spiritual coldness that we see all around us and the moral declension that abounds. Some insist that we need a revival by the Holy Spirit, but how can this take place if the Word of God is ignored or banished from our lives? It is the office of the Holy Spirit to work upon God's Word, to convict, enlighten and convince. If we want a revival of interest in the Truth of God, then the sooner we put the Word of Truth in its rightful place, the sooner this may come.

But if it doesn't, it is still the duty and privilege of all who call themselves Christians to hold fast to the Word of God and seek by every legitimate means to make it known. Paul's last command to Timothy was to "*preach the Word*" (II Tim. iv. 2) and to pass on that Word of Truth to "faithful men who shall be able to teach others also" (ii. 1, 2). There can be no substitute for this if we want Christian truth maintained and spread, and it is the greatest antidote to error.

The Lord Jesus constantly set the example to us by His constant appeal to the written Word, the O.T. Scriptures. In the passage before us He does so to combat the shocking ignorance of the Sadducees. Matt. xxii. 32 is often misinterpreted. It certainly deals with life after death, but stresses the only thing that makes this possible, that is, resurrection. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (32), thus verse 31 states "*as touching the resurrection of the dead*" God said He was not the God of the dead but of the living.

Luke's account also makes this clear:

"Now *that the dead are raised*, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob', for He is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Luke xx. 37, 38).

To introduce any other reason for life beyond the grave is to ignore the words of Christ and substitute fallible human opinion (see the booklet by the author, *Resurrection and the Purpose of the Ages*).

The Evangelist records another problem addressed to the Lord Jesus by a Pharisee who was a specialist on the law given through Moses:

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” (xxii. 36, N.I.V.).

Christ sums it up, as the apostle Paul did later, by giving the word that covers it all, namely love (Rom. xiii. 8-10). The first five commandments show what love to God comprises, and the second five, love to one’s neighbour. “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (xxii. 40). And so there is not one supreme commandment but two of equal importance.

In the last verses of the chapter we find the position reversed, and the Lord Jesus questioning the Pharisees:

“Who do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He? ‘The Son of David’, they replied. He said to them, “How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls Him ‘Lord’? For he says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet’.” If then David calls Him Lord, how can He be his Son?”. (xxii. 42-45, N.I.V.).

They were asked about the Sonship of the Messiah. They correctly answered “the Son of David”, but Christ is going to show them that the truth is much wider than this and then He refers them to Psalm cx. This Psalm is evidently of great importance, for it is quoted in the N.T. seven times (Matt. xxii. 44; Mark xii. 36; Luke xx. 42; Acts ii. 34; Heb. i. 13; x. 13; I Cor. xv. 25). It is obvious that the Lord Jesus believed that David wrote the Psalm under the influence of the Holy Spirit (Matt. xxii. 43). One would have thought that this would be enough for anyone who revered the Son of God. But no; the critics say the Davidic authorship is not true. Dr. A. Plummer gives the reasons of three critics, and assumes they are correct. It is quite pathetic to read how these people try to extricate themselves from problems of their own making. It is far safer to believe Christ than man, even though the critic is religious!

The title “the Son of David” gave Christ the right *to the throne*, but it did not cover *all* the truth related to the Messiah, for Messiah was more than just a remarkable man. This becomes evident in the second question the Lord put to the Pharisees.

Referring to Psalm cx. Christ says:

“If then David calls Him ‘Lord’, how can He be his Son?” (xxii. 45, N.I.V.),

and the problem is only resolved when one accepts the fact of the Lord’s Deity as well as His Humanity. As God He was David’s Lord; as Man He was David’s son; and this the Pharisees had not realized, for they could not answer the question. In the same way the Revelation gives Christ the title of “the Root and the Offspring of David” (Rev. xxii. 16) which, on the surface, is a contradiction, but not if His Deity and Humanity are held in balance. Thus we see that the Lord Jesus was victorious in putting questions as well as replying to them. We should note the climax in three stages, (1) “marveling” (xxii. 22 A.V.), (2) “amazement” (astonished, A.V. & N.I.V.) (33), and (3) “not daring to ask any more questions” (46).

Coming now to chapter xxiii. we are not surprised to find that it is in three parts: (1) Criticisms and exhortations addressed to the mixed multitude and the disciples. (2) Seven woes addressed to the Rabbis and Pharisees. (3) Judgments on the nation and upon Jerusalem. We now come to a crisis point in the relationship of the Lord and the religious leaders. It is a situation of open hostility. They continue in their determination to destroy Him and He publicly denounces them in terribly solemn words (xxiii. 13-33).

Verse 3 needs care. Omit the word 'that' in the A.V. as it is not in the Greek and it is better to treat the verb as indicative rather than imperative. The Lord Jesus is unlikely to command the disciples to obey the scribes and Pharisees, when He so severely criticizes them, calling them hypocrites. Verse 3 then reads, "all therefore whatever they bid you, you observe and do, but do not after their works". They do not practice what they preach, but go in for just outward show and the praise of men (5-7). They wore phylacteries (which were boxes containing verses of the O.T. on the forehead and arm). They even believed God wore them! They came to be regarded as nothing more than charms.

The disciples were warned that they must not use exalted titles like Rabbi (master), or Father (a title that was kept for Rabbis). They had one Father in heaven and one teacher, Christ Himself, and they must learn to keep humble, because only such would be owned and exalted by God (8-12).

The Lord goes on to denounce their hindering of those who were keen to enter the kingdom, and the fact that they themselves refused to do so (13). Verse 14 is omitted by some of the principal texts and put in the margin in some translations. The truth is repeated in Mark xii. 40 and Luke xx. 47 where they prey on widows and for a show make lengthy prayers. In their fanaticism they go to any length to make converts to their empty traditions (15). They made false differences in vows (16-22). They stressed tiny unessentials, like tithing herbs, but the weighty matters, justice, mercy and faithfulness, they neglected (23). They "strained *out* a gnat and swallowed a camel" (an unclean animal), not "strained *at* a gnat" as in the A.V.: a mistake made in all editions of the A.V. All the former translations had "out". Their ceremonial cleanliness merely related to externals. Inside, said the Lord, they were full of greed, self-indulgence (25). They were like whitewashed tombs, beautiful on the outside, but full of foulness within (27, 28). (It was the custom to whiten tombs a month before Passover, so that people might not touch them and become ceremonially unclean).

They decorated the tombs of the prophets and said they would not have associated themselves with the forefathers who killed them (29, 30). Yet they were plotting to murder the greatest Prophet! No wonder the Lord Jesus called them hypocrites.

No.33. xxiii. 33 - xxiv. 14.
pp. 145 - 150

In the terrible words that follow, the wrath of the Lamb is manifested, and we have no right to apologize for them or to tone them down. Christ, as the perfect Man, was capable of *righteous* anger, which is impossible to the human race involved in sin and death. The book of The Revelation reveals the wrath of God, but it is not the wrath of the Father or the Holy Spirit, but the *wrath of the Lamb* (Christ) (Rev. vi. 15-17). There are those who hold human and sentimental conceptions of Christ and do not believe that He can indulge in anger. This may be true of human anger which is tainted with injustice and spite. But He is utterly holy and righteous and His anger is but the reverse side of the coin. We have to choose whether we believe the inspired Word of God or human opinion.

He said:

“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues, and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berakiah, whom you murdered between the Temple and the Altar. I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation” (xxiii. 33-36, N.I.V.).

Both the Lord and John the Baptist had likened many of the people to dangerous snakes (Matt. iii. 7). The Lord foretells their murderous activities (xxiii. 34, 35) and their vicious persecution of the people of God.

Verse 35 presents a problem. Each generation that condemns the wickedness of its predecessors, yet repeats the wickedness, is more guilty than its predecessors and has more responsibility for which it must answer to the Lord. Christ declares that all the righteous blood shed on earth from righteous Abel to Zechariah whom they murdered between the Temple and Altar would rest on this wicked generation. This seems to be a reference to II Chron. xxiv. 20-22, but there he is called the son of Jehoiada, not Berakiah (as Matthew states). Jehoiada possibly had Berakiah as a second name and it is significant that in Luke, “the son of Berakiah” is omitted (Luke xi. 51). If it refers to the prophet (Zech. i. 1) then we have no record of him being murdered in this way.

We must remember that in the Jewish Bible, Chronicles comes *last* in the O.T. canon, and therefore “the blood of Abel” is the first murder of the O.T. and “the blood of Zechariah” is the last recorded, though in point of time that of Uriah by Jehoiakim (Jeremiah xxvi. 23) took place later. It should be noted too that in both cases a reckoning for them would be made. “The voice of thy brother’s blood *crieth unto Me from the ground*” (Gen. iv. 10); “The Lord look upon it *and required it*” (II Chron. xxiv. 22). Three times blood is mentioned in Matt. xxiii. 35, and if the student studies this chapter carefully he will find other triplets which are in line with Matthew’s style.

The chapter ends with the Lord's lament over Jerusalem. The tragedy of the city had reduced the Lord to tears (Luke xix. 41) and here again He shows His love for the city of His choice. "How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing" (Matt. xxiii. 37). The depth of love and feeling is wonderfully expressed here, "I would", I longed to gather and protect you, but "ye would not", you were not willing for this to happen. This contradiction has been enacted thousands of times since this date, always ending with loss and tragedy, as it must do if God's will is resisted and set aside. This is a wonderful example of the One Who is God and at the same time truly human, with the exception of sin.

The Lord Jesus said sorrowfully, "Look, your house is left to you desolate". At the beginning of this Gospel the Temple was God's house. Now, because of their apostasy it was just their house, without God's presence.

He finishes by saying that they would not see Him again until they could say "blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord" (Psa. cxviii. 26). So, in spite of all the sorrow and rejection, they had a future which is based on His Second Coming and this time, when they see Him, they will truly repent and accept Him (Zech. xii. 8-14; Rev. i. 7).

The prophecy concerning the end of the age.

There is no doubt that in the prophetic Scriptures the 24th chapter of Matthew is of great importance. If this chapter is wrongly interpreted, confusion is bound to occur as regards future events in this age.

Many modern expositors have difficulties with this chapter and this is largely because they misinterpret the kingdom of heaven, fail to identify it with the great Messianic kingdom prophesied in the O.T., confuse it with the church and then spiritualize its teaching to fit their ideas. They spiritualize all obvious meaning out of the plain Greek, with the result that we have just a *spiritual* coming of Christ, Who administers only *spiritual* matters in a *spiritual* kingdom. This is a travesty of what the Bible teaches on this great subject.

The truth given in this chapter resulted from the disciples drawing the Lord's attention to the magnificent Temple of Herod the Great (Matt. xxiv. 1; Mark xiii. 1). It was not even yet complete and they had already spent forty-six years in re-building it (John.ii.20). It was doubtless one of the most wonderful buildings of the ancient world and made a dazzling sight.

The Lord's reply was startling in the extreme:

"Do you see all these things?" He asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down" (xxiv. 2, N.I.V.).

The stones were of polished marble and the thought that the whole building would be reduced to rubble and its beauty destroyed was almost unbelievable, as was the idea that God would allow such a thing to happen to His house.

We can well imagine how great the shock must have been to the disciples, for, as Christ was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him to get further information about this tremendous event:

“Tell us”, they said, “when this will happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (xxiv. 3, N.I.V.).

This threefold query the Lord answers in the reverse order, (1) the end of the age (xxiv. 4-24), (2) the sign of His coming (*parousia*) (25-31-), and (3) when it will take place (-31-42). It is important to notice that the disciples were not concerned as to when the end of the world would take place (as A.V.). The word is *age*, and the end of the age would coincide with the conclusion of Daniel’s seventy weeks of years (Dan. ix.) which contain the fulfillment of God’s plan for Israel.

Before the Lord commences His reply, He sounds a note of warning, which He repeats over and over again, hence its importance:

“Jesus answered, ‘Watch out that no one *deceives* you. For *many* will come in My Name, claiming, I am the Christ, *and will deceive many*.’” (xxiv. 4, 5, N.I.V.).

“and *many* false prophets will appear and *deceive many people*” (11, N.I.V.).

“For false Christ and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles *to deceive even the elect*—if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time” (24, 25, N.I.V.).

The apostle Paul, when treating of the same time, also stresses deception:

“That wicked one shall be revealed even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all *deceivableness* of unrighteousness” (II Thess. ii. 8-10).

This period then is going to be a time of great danger. These false prophets and false Messiahs obviously originate from the religious world and are just tools of Satan, the father of lies. All this is confirmed in the book of Revelation which deals with the same period as Matt. xxiv.:

“The wild beast ‘doeth great wonders and *deceiveth them that dwell on the earth*, by reason of those miracles’.” (Rev. xiii. 13, 14).

The two great opposing systems of the Lie and the Truth come out into the open at last, and we have the final clash between them before the Second Coming of Christ and the inauguration of His kingdom on earth. It is the time of the greatest difficulty and danger recorded in history, as Matt. xxiv. 21 clearly teaches, and the only place of safety is keeping close to the guidance of His Word, not adding nor taking away a fraction of what is written there concerning this great climax.

Wars and rumours of wars will come, but these are not the indications of the end, but rather “the beginning of sorrows” (xxiv. 8). The Lord quotes Isa. xix. 2 as an illustration of this, and it is one of seven quotations from the O.T. that He makes in this address, which we shall note as we consider its details. The word “sorrows” in the Greek

is “birth-pains” and is correctly rendered in the N.I.V. In this blackest of contexts, perhaps this is a ray of hope looking forward to the light of the kingdom which is soon to come when the Lord returns.

He goes on to predict many false Messiahs, false prophets, international conflict, famines, earthquakes, persecution, betrayal, abounding sin, but in spite of all this, “the end is not yet”. As regards earthquakes, it seems they are increasing in number and intensity. What is absolutely sure is one will occur in the last seven years of this age that will eclipse all others. “And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great” (Rev. xvi. 18). God will terribly shake the earth.

This terrible condition of the world is a prelude to the fulfillment of prophecy which deals with the closing years of the age, and is ended by the return of Christ and the angels of God in great glory and power. In other words this final working out is set *in the last seven years of Daniel’s “seventy—sevens”* (chapter ix.), as we have stated before. Any attempt at trying to make *all* the details given here by the Lord fit a time prior to this is bound to fail. During this period there can only be a partial fulfillment at the most. Let us not forget it is the *end time* that perplexed the disciples, and the Lord is dealing with *this particular time*, and it is wrong interpretation to ignore this and try to make it fit the age in general.

Once we know and understand the prophecies which deal with the end time (largely Daniel and The Revelation), we have the key to unlock the prophecy that the Lord is giving and many problems then vanish. Too often we make our own difficulties by ignoring to whom the Scripture is addressed and its time setting. The more this is seriously considered the more one wonders at the once popular teaching that the Second Advent cannot occur until the world is converted.

This idea has certainly not clear Scriptural foundation and must be rejected. The world situation as described by the Lord Jesus is as black as can be painted, and leading to a time of trouble the intensity of which has never occurred in past history nor ever will again in the future (Matt. xxiv. 21 and 22).

It will be a tremendous testing time for the people of God. Hence the Lord’s statement “but he who stands firm to the end will be saved” (13). If this verse is taken out of its context it can be made to teach that salvation can be attained by human effort, and this is directly opposed to the constant testimony of holy Scripture that salvation is by grace alone, apart from works or human merit. Kept in its Scriptural setting of overwhelming difficulty and danger, it teaches that the faithful one (aided by the Lord) will surmount it all and this is given for strengthening and encouragement.

The Lord Jesus continues:

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (xxiv. 14, N.I.V.).

In view of the bewildering ideas that exist in the religious world as to what this gospel is, we do not add any ideas of our own, but go directly to the fountain head, the Word of God for instruction. One expositor writes “if we could settle the question as to what the gospel of the kingdom is, in the event that it is something other than the gospel which the apostles began to preach at Pentecost, and which the church has preached since, the eschatological problem would be solved” (Dr. R. O. Yeager). And its importance is stressed by the fact that the end of the age cannot come until this gospel has been preached in the whole world (14).

The fact remains that it has been dealt with and its terms made clear in the N.T., and for this we must turn to the Gospel of Mark:

“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, *preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God* and saying, *the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel*” (Mark i. 14, 15).

This good news is surely not complex and difficult to understand provided we are prepared to believe what it says without adding ideas of our own. Up till now the kingdom had been made known through the prophetic Scriptures of the O.T. The waiting time had now passed and the time of its realization or fulfillment had come. The King was present and therefore this kingdom was “at hand” or near. Only two other things were necessary, (1) to change one’s attitude of mind (repent), and (2) to believe this tremendous news, and one needs to have one’s mind refreshed with the greatness of the kingdom in all its detail given in the O.T. Scriptures to appreciate the good news (gospel) that it contained.

**No.34. xxiv. 15 - 33.
pp. 161 - 167**

It is important to note that in this gospel of the kingdom there is no reference to Calvary or to Christ as the all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, and this should prevent us from confusing it with the gospel of grace that was later revealed by the ascended Christ to the apostle Paul (Gal. i. 11, 12) and preached by him (I Cor. xv. 3, 4). This is made even more clear when we remember that the Twelve who were commissioned to preach this kingdom gospel (Matt. x. 5-7), did not realize that Christ had to die and were even opposed to the idea (Matt. xvi. 21-23).

Even though this is so, we should always remember that *redemption* underpins the whole purpose of God in Christ, and this must include His kingdom purposes. The gospel of the grace of God upon which this rests was proclaimed by Paul and had spread to “every creature which is under heaven” (Col. i. 23), and so had gone world-wide before Paul’s martyrdom. The chief point in Matthew’s gospel is that the earthly kingdom was *near*. When we consider Matt. xxiv. this is particularly evident, because we are in Daniel’s seventieth week of years, the last seven years of the age, which is

ended by Christ's return in glory. Consequently once more the nearness of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world for a witness.

Who will proclaim it? Rev. xi. 3-12 reveals that two witnesses are raised up by God and miraculously sustained and protected by Him until they have finished their testimony. There is also the sealed remnant of Israel (Rev. vii.) who remain faithful to the end. God never leaves Himself without a witness even during the worst apostasy recorded in history. The world will then be without excuse during this time.

The Lord goes on to add:

“So when you see standing in the holy place the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no-one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no-one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath” (xxiv. 15-20, N.I.V.).

The word “abomination” is always linked with idolatry in the O.T. This idol is referred to in Dan. ix. 27; xi. 31; xii. 11, and is linked with the antichristian wild beast of the end time. Some expositors try to find the fulfillment in the action of Antiochus Epiphanes who erected an altar to Zeus on the altar of Jehovah (1Macc.1:54; 59:6,7; 2Macc.6:1-5). But this was past history when Christ was speaking, and He was undoubtedly referring to the future.

The act of Antiochus foreshadowed the final abomination. The one described by Daniel occurs in the *middle* of the 70th week of years (Dan. ix. 27) and this leaves another 3½ years to run, variously described as “42 months” (Rev. xi. 2; xiii. 5), “1,260 days” (Rev. xii. 6), or “time, times, and half a time” (Dan. vii. 25; xii. 7; Rev.xii.14).

This idol is connected with *worship*, and from other passages it evidently refers to the image of himself that the Antichrist sets up in the restored Temple of the end time and commands universal homage (Rev. xiii. 5-8; II Thess. ii. 1-4). There are expositors who link the whole of Matt. xxiv. with the catastrophe of 70A.D. which records the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple, but this again is impossible, for Matt. xxiv. is linked by the Lord to the greatest time of tribulation for the world which has not been equaled in past history, nor will be in the future (Matt. xxiv. 21). What happened to the Jews at 70A.D. was terrible as Josephus relates, but it was not the greatest tribulation of all time involving the whole earth.

If we note carefully the words which Christ uses, we are bound to relate them to Daniel xii. 1:

“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people (the Jews): and there shall be a *time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time*: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (A.V.).

This squares with the Lord's words in Matt. xxiv. 21. The temporal adverb *tote*, "then, at that time", occurs here and many times in this chapter and the next one. It occurs seven times in chapter xxiv. and seven times in the 25th chapter, and is the answer to the disciples' query "when?". The terrible persecution of the *great whole dictator* of the end time will make immediate flight necessary. It must be done with all speed (xxiv. 20), which winter traveling and Sabbath regulations might hinder.

The time is so dangerous that, unless the Lord intervenes, it would result in universal annihilation (22). Man at last has discovered how to exterminate not only himself but the human race, and the Lord reveals that this is what will happen unless he is prevented from doing so. God will shorten this terrible time to 3½ years, the second half of Daniel's last years of seven, and end it by the sudden coming of the Lord Jesus in great glory and power which brings Satan's great dictator to his end (II Thess. ii. 8-10).

In the verses that follow, the Lord Jesus again warns against deception by false Messiahs:

"At that time if anyone says to you, 'look, here is Christ!' or 'there He is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time" (xxiv. 23-25, N.I.V.).

Satan, the great deceiver of mankind, will see to it that these spurious Christs and prophets are able to perform spectacular miracles. The word *tote* (at that time) again ties the events of verse 23 with those that have gone before in the previous verses. Satan knows only too well that when anything that appears to be miraculous occurs, the average person ascribes it to God. But the Bible reveals that Satan and the forces of darkness under his control can work miracles and this is one of his most dangerous weapons. The book of Revelation and II Thessalonians make this clear:

"Then I saw another beast and *he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of man. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth*" (Rev. xiii. 11-17, N.I.V.).

". . . . the coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in *all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing*" (II Thess. ii. 9, 10, N.I.V.).

If the elect scarcely are saved from deception, it is obvious that the unregenerate will be completely deceived by these miracles. This is Satan's counterfeit of the true miracles that confirmed the ministry of the Lord Jesus:

"This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard Him. *God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will*" (Heb. ii. 3, 4, N.I.V.).

The fact that Christ was able to perform miracles did not prove that He came from the Father. Rather it was that He performed the specific miracles that the O.T. had predicted

of Messiah (Isa. xxxv. 4-6). Thus the Lord has forewarned His people, and to be forewarned is to be forearmed.

The Lord Jesus now deals with the sign of His coming which had been requested by the disciples (Matt. xxiv. 3). This tremendous event is not going to be announced from heaven days before it takes place, for it will be sudden, like a flash of lightning (27) and come like a thunderbolt upon an unprepared and deceived world. The apostle Paul describes it in II Thess. i. 7-10:

“. . . . when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power on the day He comes” (N.I.V.).

The Lord continues:

“Immediately after the distress of those days (the great tribulation) the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky and the heavenly bodies will be shaken” (xxiv. 29, N.I.V.).

Spiritualizers will not take these words literally. Thus the moon is the Church, which will receive no light from Christ Who is the sun, because of her carnal desires. The stars are the saints who then lose their influence, and so on. How much more simple and satisfactory it is to take what the Lord said as literal guidance to the disciples regarding the immediate future, and then end-time information for the end-time believers. How near this was the Lord gave no indication, for Israel had to be tested again (in the Acts period) and this could not be revealed at this moment.

That these signs in the heavens are literal is borne out by the O.T.:

“Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil” (Isa. xiii. 9-11, A.V.).

See also Joel ii. 10, 30-32 (quoted in Acts ii. 19-21) and Rev. vi. 12-17. Those who want to spiritualize must do so with *every* detail here. Applying this only to some items will not do. One should note how the book of Revelation chapter vi. gives symbolically the same truths in the same order as Christ has stated. The first seal gives false peace which will be replaced by war (second seal). In turn this is replaced by famine (third seal) and by pestilence (fourth seal). All this leads to the Second Advent of the Lord and the great day of His wrath with its catastrophic effect on mankind, especially His enemies. Drastic disturbances in the heavens will accompany these events.

Then follows the overwhelming coming of the Lord in tremendous glory, with the angels of heaven accompanying Him. Read the vivid description of it in Rev. xix. 11-16. *Then (tote)* the tribes of the land (better than “earth”) will mourn, when they see the Son

of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matt. xxiv. 30). The tribes are those of Israel. The Bible does not designate the nations of the earth as tribes.

Revelation i. 7 reads:

“Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, *even* those who pierced Him (Israel).”

Here at last is the real mourning of Israel for their sin of rejection of their Messiah and King. They will at last be convicted and realize that this One in all His glory is the One that they refused and crucified. They will at last come to their *real* day of atonement which now they keep typically every year. This repentance of Israel which should have taken place at the Lord’s first coming, and if not then, when Peter commanded it in Acts iii. 19-26, is described by Zech xii. 10-14:

“. . . . I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and *they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son*”.

The Scriptures even tell us where Christ comes to on the earth. It is the last place that His feet touched when He ascended, namely the Mount of Olives, outside Jerusalem. One reason for His coming is to rescue Israel in the land from all the nations who have gathered against Jerusalem and themselves. This is Armageddon (Rev. xvi. 13-16).

Zechariah writes:

“On that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with Him” (Zech. xiv. 4-5, N.I.V.).

This splitting of the Mount of Olives will be done by a great earthquake, forming an escape route for the persecuted Jews of that time.

The Lord Jesus goes on to inform the disciples:

“They (the earth’s inhabitants) will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other” (Matt. xxiv. 30, 31, N.I.V.).

This glorious coming on the clouds of the sky, has already been prophesied in Dan.vii.13,14:

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, *coming with the clouds of heaven* He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; *all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed*” (N.I.V.).

The gathering of His chosen ones (elect) world wide is surely fulfilled in the many Scriptures that predict the regathering of Israel to the land promised then unconditionally

by God, from the Nile to the river Euphrates (Gen. xv. 18). See Isa. xi. 11, 12; xliii. 5-7; Jer. xxiv. 6, 7; xxxi. 10; Eze. xx. 41, 42; xxviii. 25, 26; Amos ix. 13-15; Micah iv. 1-8; Zeph. iii. 19, 20 (see *The Kingdom of God in Heaven and on Earth* by the author).

All this takes place at the great sound of a trumpet in heaven, and it is significant that, at the last trumpet, the seventh, in Revelation, we read:

“And the *seventh angel sounded*; and there was great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world *are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever*” (Rev. xi. 15, A.V.).

Continuing to answer the disciples’ query as to the time of His Second Coming, the Lord gives the parable of the fig tree:

“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it (or ‘he’ -- footnote) is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away” (xxiv. 32-35, N.I.V.).

The vine, the olive and the fig tree were frequent Biblical symbols of the nation of Israel (for the fig see Jer. xxxiv.; Joel i. 6, 7; Hosea ix. 10). Christ had used the illustration of a fig tree before in Luke xiii. 6, 7. The owner of the vineyard (a picture of Himself) had expected fruit for *three* years and found none. He told the man in charge to cut it down as it was occupying soil to no advantage, but the man pleaded with the owner to spare it and he would give it special treatment, and if this did not result in figs then he would remove it.

The teaching is obvious. The three years represented the earthly ministry of the Saviour to Israel. On the whole it was fruitless, but Israel was not cut off at the end but given another opportunity of responding. This is represented by the ministry of the Acts which followed, when the nation was commanded once again to repent and turn to the Lord, in which case their sins would be forgiven, Christ would return to them, and the “times of refreshing” of the Messianic kingdom would then set in. This time of “sparing” covered some 35 years, and Israel did not repent. The tree was cut down at Acts xxviii. and the nation entered its long condition of spiritual blindness and hardness of heart which has lasted till the present time. But this will not be for ever, as Rom. xi. 15-29 clearly teaches. It is ended by the glorious Second Coming which our context in Matthew deals with (and note Rom. xi. 26, 27).

In Luke’s account, he includes “all the trees”, as well as the fig, producing leaves of spring and summer after the winter. Thus the nations as a whole are included showing nationalistic life demanding recognition. This has been one of the characteristics of the end of this century all over the world, but specially so in Israel. This is a sure sign, the Lord taught, that His coming was near.

No.35. xxiv. 34 - xxv. 30.
pp. 186 - 192

We must pause to consider Matt. xxiv. 34, “this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled”. Is the Lord Jesus referring to the generation He was addressing, or the nation as a whole in the future, or concentrating on the generation at the end time who will witness all He has revealed of the period just before the Second Coming, and the Coming itself?

The word used for generation is *genea*, and we are sometimes told that this cannot mean a nation as a whole but must be kept to the concept of a generation of people. This is not true. Arndt & Gingrich in their lexicon give as the first meaning, “those descended from an ancestor, a clan, then race”, and therefore it can mean the nation of Israel here. But we feel that the Lord is meaning more than this. It is essential that we interpret this verse *in the setting that we find it*.

Once again we remind ourselves that Christ is dealing with the *end of the age*, as He had been asked vivid details of this time which leads, without a break, to His Coming in glory. *Genea* has a secondary meaning of generation, and surely if this is the meaning of the word here, it most naturally refers to the generation of that special time of the last seven years of the age. We can then understand why that particular generation will not pass away till all these events have been fulfilled. What it cannot mean is the generation of the disciples to whom the Lord was speaking. The generation certainly passed away without the fulfillment of the Lord’s prophecy.

The early Christians had enough sense to see that this interpretation was impossible, for Christ had not returned and the apostles and their contemporaries had died. Nevertheless they still expected the Lord’s Second Coming and held to the belief for a long period. Thus we can say that the group of people who live to see these things (the events of Matt. xxiv.) come to pass, will live to see the end of the prophecy fulfilled. There is therefore no problem such as is made by those who insist that “this generation” must mean the one that the Lord addressed, and the idea has caused endless controversy which is quite needless.

If Matt. xxiv. is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70A.D. as some teach, then (1) the Lord did not come with His holy angels; (2) nor did the kingdom of everlasting righteousness foretold by Daniel come to pass. This was to take place at the smashing of the Gentile image and domination (Dan. ii. 34, 35, 44, 45) by the stone cut without hands (Christ) which was scheduled at the end of the last week of years, at Christ’s return.

These are only some of the problems caused by wrong interpretation and should be a lesson to all of us.

The Lord Jesus asserts that the solemn predictions He has made will certainly be fulfilled without the slightest alteration:

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away” (xxiv. 35, N.I.V.),

also:

“No-one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (36, N.I.V.).

The phrase “neither the Son” is omitted by the A.V., but is found in Mark xiii. 32. There is strong textual evidence for its inclusion in Matthew. This need not cause a problem when we remember that the perfect knowledge shared by the members of the Godhead as part of that which Christ voluntarily refrained from using during His earthly ministry, except in those instances when such knowledge was needed for His purpose.

If we really believe the words of Christ, then no scheme of date setting of the day and hour for the Second Advent is possible. Yet people who are attracted by numbers still attempt to do this. We have known two or three such predictions by believers come to grief. The pity of it is that not only do these people look foolish, but they bring into contempt the teaching of the prophetic Scriptures and this is serious indeed. The only people who will be helped by dates will be those who live in Daniel’s last week of years. They will have two historical facts to guide them, (1) the Antichrist making a covenant with Israel (Dan. ix. 27), and (2) halfway through this time (after 3½ years) breaking it. This leaves another 3½ years to run which covers the Great Tribulation and is ended by Christ’s Coming and the destruction of the man of sin.

Therefore those living at this time can compute the *year* but not *the day or hour* of Christ’s Coming. In the same way Noah knew exactly seven days before the Flood commenced (Gen. vii. 4). Everyone else had better leave time computation alone if they do not want to be deceived and deceive others.

The Lord now, as a warning, likens the end time to the days of Noah—“as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the Coming of the Son of Man” (Matt. xxiv. 37). He had already described it as a terrible time of darkness, apostasy and sin (xxiv. 10-12); and this is confirmed in II Tim. iii. 1-4 and Gen. vi. In an age of great wickedness (Gen. vi. 5) men were living without any thought of God and His warnings (Matt.xxiv.38,39) and were utterly unprepared. Suddenly the overwhelming judgment of the Flood took place. The time in Genesis was one of being “filled with violence” (Genes vi. 11-13). It was therefore world wide. This too is characteristic of the end of this age, and is certainly a prominent feature of the present time. The murders, rapes, mugging and violence of all kinds are constantly happening all over the world and are not being controlled.

The great wickedness of Gen. vi. is being repeated today. The Flood took away all the wicked, the Second Coming of Christ and the judgments at that time will do a similar work. There will be a division even between workers in a field or those grinding with a hand mill—“one will be taken and the other left” (Matt. xxiv. 40, 41). What does “taken”

and “left” mean? Some interpret the words as taken for judgment and left for blessing. Others reverse this. *Paralambano* “taken” is generally used in a good sense (see Matthew i. 20, 24; xvii. 1; John xiv. 3 translated “receive”). It is better therefore to understand it to mean “taken” (for blessing). The word “take” in Matt. xxiv. 39 is not the same. Luke’s addition “in that night there shall be two men in one bed” (xvii. 34) completes the whole day and night.

The Lord now stresses the need for *readiness*:

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on *what day* your Lord will come”
(Matt. xxiv. 42, N.I.V.).

The word “keep watch” literally means “keep awake”. This is no time to be drowsy, but rather to be constantly on the alert. The world around sleeps the sleep of the drugged and is impervious to the solemnity of the times, with their many signs pointing to the nearness of the end. The Lord’s people in this period will be in two classes, those who are watchful and ready, and those who are not. It is this all-needed readiness that is now going to be stressed by the Lord Jesus. He gives two illustrations, the first of the house owner who failed to keep watch and therefore gave the burglar the opportunity to steal (43, 44). The second is that of the servants who are put in charge of their master’s property when he is absent. Some are loyal and on the alert; others are careless and indulge in drunkenness and fail to do their duty, so when the master returns suddenly they are severely punished, while the loyal ones are rewarded (45-50).

The same stress on readiness is found in I Thess. v. 4-7; Rev. iii. 3; xvi. 15, and it is the key to the parables of the Virgins and the Talents in the next chapter which now follows.

The Parables of the Ten Virgins.

It is very important that we are not led astray by the chapter division. Once more the adverb *tote* appears, which means “then”, “at that time”, and refers back to the times of the day of Noah and the events described by the Lord in the 24th chapter. It does *not* refer to this age of grace and the history of the Christian church, or teach that this is the setting for the parable of the Ten Virgins. Rather it says “then, at that time” (when Antichrist is dominating and the Great Tribulation a terrible reality), “the kingdom of heaven will become like ten virgins”. We must remember that the Lord Jesus is still answering the threefold question of the disciples raised in xxiv. 3 concerning His Second Coming, and the end (*sunteleia*, harvest) of the age.

At this time the parable states that ten virgins took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. There is no suggestion that the five foolish virgins were unsaved or hypocrites. The whole point is that *they were unready*, unprepared for meeting the bridegroom. This was a warning, not to unsaved sinners, but rather to saints. Hence the stress of *preparedness to the disciples*.

We must not make the mistake of identifying them with the Bride. They are rather the “bridesmaids” at the wedding and are among those who are *invited* to it. These are distinguished from the Bride in Psa. xlv. 13-15 and Rev. xix. The virgins are among those who are desirous of *entering the kingdom of heaven*, and this, as we have seen, is one of the chief features of this Gospel.

Some are wise and some are foolish and as such would not be a suitable picture of the Bride who consists of the “overcomers”, those who are consistently faithful (such as those listed in Heb. xi. And others who are so described in the book of Revelation).

There is no need to interpret the oil as representing the Holy Spirit. The chief thought in the parable is readiness or the lack of it. It was *readiness* that gave the entrance to the wedding festivity. “The virgins *who were ready* went in with him (the bridegroom) to the wedding banquet” (Matt. xxv. 10 N.I.V.), and this is surely what the oil represents. The foolish virgins were never ready. Their lamps had no oil (3), so that when they tried to light them when the call to the marriage occurred, the wicks, being dry, just flickered and went out. “Our lamps are going out” they said, as with horror they realized they were without oil. The verb is in the present tense, which is missed by the text of the A.V. They put “going out” in the margin. It was now too late, even to get oil from the wise ones, who in any case were not in a position to supply it. No one can give readiness to someone else! The consequences of their folly could not be averted at the last moment, even though they cried and begged to be admitted (11). The reply of the bridegroom was severe, “I do not acknowledge you” (Rotherham footnote), or as Knox translates it, “I do not recognize you”. This is parallel with the statement in vii. 23. Of course he knew them in the sense that they existed, but he didn’t recognize them as keen expectant attendants at his wedding. The Lord ends this parable by again stressing watchfulness and readiness. “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour” (xxv. 13 N.I.V.).

The *entrance* of the wise virgins to the wedding is parallel to *entering* the kingdom of heaven, “enter” being one of Matthew’s key-words (see the Sermon on the Mount). This is “reward” teaching which is also stressed in that great Sermon. We should remember that Scripture teaches that *rewards* can be won or lost, but not *salvation*.

The Parable of the Talents.

If *readiness* is the key thought of the parable of the Ten Virgins, then *faithfulness* is the key thought of the Talents.

This parable is similar to the parable of the Pounds in Luke xix. 11-28 but they are not variations of the same story. They have their differences. In the former one the lord divides his goods “according to their several ability”, so that the servants can say “*I have gained five talents*”, but when the lord gives to each the same, that is one pound, the servant says, “*Thy pound has gained*”. In terms of doctrine we have this difference expressed in Philippians. “Work out your own salvation” (Phil. ii. 12, 13) gives us the Talent aspect, the “several ability”, the “I have gained” position, followed by “For it is

God that worketh in you”, that is the “one pound” aspect, “Thy pound has gained”, with no reference to the individual ability. The word “gain” is an important word in Philippians.

Once more *gain* or *reward* is the theme in the second parable (of the Pounds). In both parables the unprofitable servant hides the money; the one in the earth, the other in a napkin. His words that he knew his lord “reaped where he had not sown” was false as an excuse, yet there was truth there, for the Lord reaps where He has not sown in the loving service of His people, for they “work out” what He has “worked in”.

The faithful servant in each case is rewarded according to the amount gained. In both cases they are made *rulers* and this is parallel to the *reigning* with Christ expressed in II Tim. ii. 11, 12 for those who suffer and endure with Him. Living with Christ is one thing; reigning and ruling with Him is another, that associated with the faithful overcomer which can be lost by unfaithfulness or slackness.

The punishment of the lazy servant is severe, like the one who is “saved so as by fire” (I Cor. iii. 14, 15), the fire of God’s holiness consuming all his service so that he has nothing left to offer to the Lord.

The standard of judgment when the master returned was the same for each of the three men, even though they were entrusted with differing amount of money. Each man received an amount commensurate with his ability to handle it, and the judgment of the master was how well he had done relative to that ability. The point here is *faithfulness*, not just volume or quantity.

There is no substitute ever for *faithfulness* or *loyalty*. “It is required in stewards, that a man be found *faithful*” (I Cor. iv. 2), not necessarily successful as the world counts success. God is wanting servants on whom He can place complete reliance. Each of the three servants received praise from his master, “Well done, good and *faithful* servant!”. We do not employ persons we cannot trust who prove to be unreliable. Why should any expect God to do it?

In the parable, the lord wanted those to whom he had given the talents, to use them and make them productive for him while he was away. The first two did this, the third did not because he imputed to his lord unworthy motives, and even when he did this he was not consistent, for if the lord was a hard man, then this servant should have invested the money to have something to offer on his return. The real reason why he did nothing was because he was basically lazy. He did nothing and therefore he had nothing to offer.

We do well to remember that we have nothing but what we have been given. Even time is a precious gift. Oh to be concerned to use it primarily for the Lord’s glory and not our own! There will be a last day of service for the Lord for all of us. While we have time and opportunity, may we constantly make it fruitful for Him!

Christ concludes the parable with the Lord's order to take the talent from the lazy servant and give it to the one who had ten talents (xxv. 28, 29). It had not been productive in the hands of the third servant, but would be so when given to the one who had already used the gift entrusted to him to accumulate for his master.

No.36. xxv. 31 - 46.
pp. 206 - 212

The Lord Jesus continues His foreview of the time just prior to His Second Coming, the Coming itself, and what will happen immediately afterwards:

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and the all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right (hand) and the goats on His left” (xxv. 31-33, N.I.V.).

The throne which is His, is the throne of David which was promised at His birth:

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him *the throne of His father David*: And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke i. 32, 33, A.V.).

At His resurrection this was again stressed:

“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of *the patriarch David* therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up *Christ to sit on his (David's) throne*” (Acts ii. 29-31, A.V.).

This throne was now transformed by the returning Lord Whose sole possession it is. Around Him will be twelve thrones for the twelve Apostles who will sit on them, as He promised, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. xix. 28; Luke xxii. 30).

The question now is how we interpret *ethne* (nations) in verse 31. Does it here mean nations in the nationalistic sense, or Gentile people in an individual sense? If it is the former, does it mean that the whole human race is assembled before the Lord in the district around Jerusalem? It would mean that individuals are not dealt with as such but judged solely by the nation to which they belonged. This would mean that God would judge an individual because he happened to be born in and a citizen of a “goat” nation. Thus every individual in the goat nations would be condemned whatever their characters and actions were, and this would run into millions. It would not seem possible for a nation which consisted of millions of people to be *wholly* one or the other. It could be *predominantly* one or the other. We should remember that this is not the assembling of individuals in a group who are “sheep” or “goats”, but *nations*.

We are probably making problems here by interpreting *ethne* in a rigid nationalistic sense, whereas if we take the word to mean Gentile people in an individual sense the problem is eased. In Gal. ii. 12 we are told that Peter ate “with the Gentiles (*ethnon*)”. This certainly does not mean that Peter ate *with nations*, but with individuals who were Gentiles not Jews.

The separation here of sheep from goats reminds us of the similar separation of wheat from tares and good fish from bad (Matt. xiii. 40-43, 48-50). The separating is often done by the “goats” themselves in the present age (Luke vi. 22), but the reverse happens when the Lord Jesus returns in glory. He does the separating. The standard here is externally of “works”. It is the way they have treated “these My brethren” (xxv. 40) that decides their end. We have noted before that works dominate the Sermon on the Mount. They are crucial when the question of forgiveness is considered (vi.14,15; xviii.32-35), but this does not mean that people are *saved* by works or merit. The works are the external fruit of those who are born again (John iii. 5) and then produce acceptable service which the Lord can *reward* by entry into the great Messianic kingdom.

This is the position of those reckoned as “sheep” by the Lord. They “inherit the kingdom prepared for them by Him from or since the foundation of the world” (xxv. 34), that is, since creation. (We do not enter here into the argument as to whether the correct translation is “foundation” or “overthrow”, as this would make too big a digression).

We should also note that there was a redeemed calling in the mind of God the Father “*before* the foundation of the world” (Eph. i. 4), that is before He created, so we have a revelation here of part of His great purpose and it shows how extremely important this must be if this occupied His thoughts *before He commenced to create*.

The illustration of “sheep” is usually kept to Israel (Psa. lxxix. 13; xcv. 7; c. 3; Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 12), but here in Matthew it designates Gentiles. Further, we should remember that the Lord revealed that He had “other sheep” to bring who were *not* of (*ek*) Israel (John x. 16), that is they did not originate from Israel; this is the force of the preposition and therefore these must be saved Gentiles whom the Lord will unite with Israel to become “one flock” (not “fold” A.V.).

As we regard the kingdom of the future, we must therefore allow for a strong Gentile element linked with redeemed Israel, and this is all in line with the revealed purpose of God from the beginning, for it was declared to Abraham that his posterity would finally be a blessing to “all families of the earth” (Gen. xii. 1-3). The divine order was to be Israel first and the nations second. If this seems to be a contradiction to the Lord’s statement in the Sermon on the Mount that only *few* were entering (Matt. vii. 14), we should remember He was dealing with the lack of response to the ministry of John the Baptist and His own, whereas in Matt. xxv. the Lord is dealing with what is yet future after His Second Coming.

Another important fact we must not overlook is the doctrine concerning the two seeds, one of God and the other of Satan which is clearly taught in the parable of the wheat and

the tares. The tares are sown, not by God, but by “the enemy” (Matt. xiii. 25), and these are designated by the Lord as representing “the children of the wicked one” (38) and the one who sowed them was the devil (xiii. 39, and see Gen. iii. 15; John viii. 44, 47, and note the preposition *ek* again). We must distinguish what *originates* from God and what *originates* from Satan. They must never be confused, otherwise we shall be led into erroneous doctrine.

We must also understand that when God judges, it is the *mind* He examines first. The Lord’s words to Samuel stated truth for all time when He said “man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart (mind)” (I Sam. xvi. 7). Like Himself, His Word is “*a discerner of the thoughts and intents (intentions) of the heart (mind)*” (Heb. iv. 12), whereas man can only judge by the external action which may not accurately reflect the mind.

God is therefore a perfect discriminator and all is open to Him. Because of this, He can righteously discriminate between the sheep and the goats. He mentions their outward actions which express their inward attitude of mind. In the case of the sheep, their minds had been touched by the Lord, as they had been in His purpose since creation and He had prepared the kingdom for them (xxv. 34-36). That great purpose wrought the works mentioned in the lives of those who are counted as the sheep. The Lord calls them “the righteous ones” (37) even though they had not realized that the physical actions of mercy and kindness mentioned, were accepted by Christ as though they were done to Him:

“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me’.” (xxv. 40, N.I.V.).

Who are “these brothers of Mine”? The Lord was surrounded by Jews and was a Jew Himself. He, as it were, pointed to “*these* brothers” which can only be the Jewish people. In spite of their failing, Israel were certainly the people of God, chosen by Him, and those who minister to their physical and spiritual needs are serving the One Who chose and redeemed them, Christ Himself. We must remember that at the beginning God stated He would bless those who blessed Israel and curse those who cursed Israel (Gen. xii. 3).

In Matt. xxv. the Lord did not mean any needy person anywhere. This should be clear from the fact that He would have been teaching that the fatherhood of God relates to all men. Although this is popular in religious circles, it is certainly not Scriptural and therefore not true. This is proved from the teaching of John i. 11, 12 and other Scriptures. It is easy to base a social gospel on this parable, that if people are kind to everyone else and help them in their difficulties, they will be saved. This produces a gospel of works and human merit which is completely foreign to the sacred Scriptures, and definitely is not the teaching of the parable of the sheep and the goats.

From this story Christ not only deals with a prepared people and a prepared place for them in His kingdom, He shows clearly the destiny of the goat nations. They go to a prepared place too, but not originally for them, but for “the devil and his angels” (Matthew xxv. 41). His conclusion is:

“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life”
(Matt. xxv. 46, N.I.V.).

The word used for punishment is *kolasis*. Moulton and Milligan’s *Vocabulary* shows that it was used at the time for *pruning*, or cutting out of dead wood. It reminds one of Moses’ frequent phrase “shall be *cut off* from His people”. The words “everlasting” and “eternal” translate *aion* and *aionios*, and we need to take great care here. It has been the tendency of evangelists to oversimplify the destiny of the unsaved. *Aion* has the equivalent of *olam* in the O.T. where the concept of everlasting seems to be almost absent. Basically it suggests something hidden, an age of indefinite length, indefinite but not infinite. It is used many times in the O.T. where eternal permanence was not in view, that is a city was to be utterly destroyed and this was described as being punishment *for ever*. We must remember therefore that punishment might be terminated, but the *effects* could last for ever.

G. Abbot Smith in his *Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* says of *aion*, “a space of time, as a lifetime, generation, period of history, an indefinitely long period. In the New Testament of an indefinitely long period, an age”.

Dr. E. W. Bullinger states “. . . . the course of life, time of life, space of human life, an age. *Aion* always includes a reference to the life, filling time or space of time, hence the unbounded time past and future immeasurable time (Gen. plural of ages)” (*Critical Lexicon and Concordance*).

The word indicates time stretched out so far that we cannot see the end, but it does not necessarily mean endless. In fact it often has a defined sense of restricted time by its use with such prepositions as *before* and *during* and also such phrases as the end of the *age* (*aion*). There are quite a number of verses where this word cannot mean “eternity”. In Luke i. 70 the prophets have not been speaking since eternity. The A.V. has here “world”. In John ix. 32 the A.V. uses the word “world” again, “since the *world* began”, but it is *aion*, and cannot be rendered “since *eternity* was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one born blind”. Here it clearly means “within the memory of man”, or “for a very lone time”. When referring to the past, the word *aion* cannot mean everlasting and it is unwise to dogmatize as some do and assume it always does so when referring to the future. Professor A. T. Robertson declares that “*aionios* (from *aion*) means either without beginning or without end or both. It comes as near to the idea of eternal as the Greek can put it in one word. It is a difficult idea to put into language”. Here we get another opinion by a great scholar.

With regard to *olam*, occasionally the word is followed by the compounds *le* (to), and *adh* which is practically equivalent to the English *beyond*. But how can one have *eternity* and *beyond* that? We are certain that *aion* can mean age and we note in Scripture (Romans xvi. 25; II Tim. i. 9; Titus i. 2) we have *chronos* (time) and *aion* together, translated in the A.V. “before the world began”; literally it is “before the age-times”. Gal. i. 4 reads “this present evil world” in the A.V., but literally it is “the *now* age”, the *present* evil age. In Eph. ii. 7 we read “that in *the ages to come*” (here the A.V. avoids its usual rendering of *aion* as “world”).

Thus we see the ages had a beginning, yet an aspect of God's wonderful purpose goes back *before* this time. We live in an age at the moment, but it is evil in spite of its scientific achievements, for it rejects Christ. There are ages yet to come, how many is not revealed. It may be that the phrase "ages of ages" (rendered "ever and ever") means the closing ages when God's redemptive purpose comes to a glorious conclusion, though there are some (like the A.V. translators) who think it refers to eternity. There are expositors who limit the word "age" to *one* in the future, that is the Millennial age, but this is contrary to Eph. ii. 7.

God has certainly appointed the ages of time during which He is working out His supreme plans. In Eph. iii. 11 "the eternal purpose" is literally "purpose of the ages". We have a striking title of God in I Tim. i. 17, "Now to *the King of the ages* (see margin), incorruptible, invisible, only wise God, honour and glory to *the ages of the ages*". The ages, appointed by Him, are most certainly under His sovereign control; but they will have a conclusion when the divine purpose is fulfilled. What follows is not revealed in Scripture; neither eternity in the past or future is the subject of revelation, possibly because what eternity comprises is entirely beyond our comprehension.

We have a vast period of time divided into ages, and beyond this we cannot go.

Let no one think that if these things are true, the eternal security of the believer is endangered. This security does not rest on one Hebrew and one Greek word. *It rests on Christ*, the One Who "only hath immortality" (I Tim. vi. 15, 16), the One Who, having defeated death, "dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him" (Rom. vi. 9). This, together with the fact that the believer is eternally linked with Him Who said "because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19), means that he is eternally secure and nothing can alter this glorious fact.

The whole subject, relating to *aion* and *olam* is a difficult one, and ignorant dogmatism should be avoided. Whatever research is done on this subject, great care must be taken not to go further than is clearly revealed, for if this happens we come into the realm of fallible human opinion which can only lead to difficulty and error.

We do not take the matter any further, for its exposition does not come within the scope of the Matthew's Gospel.

No.37. xxvi. 1 - 28.
pp. 233 - 240

The 26th chapter opens with the words:

“When Jesus had finished saying all these things, He said to His disciples, ‘As you know, the Passover is two days away -- and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified’.” (N.I.V.).

His hour was approaching at last (John ii. 4). This was the crucial time upon which redemption was going to rest, anticipated by the Godhead before creation (Rev. xiii. 8) and often predicted by the Lord Jesus Himself (Matt. xvi. 21). It now was less than forty-eight hours away, and once again He tells the disciples that He will be betrayed and crucified. At the same time His enemies were meeting and craftily plotting how to get rid of Him, thus carrying out His prediction:

“Then the chief priest and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. ‘But not during the Feast’, they said, ‘or there may be a riot among the people’.” (xxvi. 3-5, N.I.V.).

Caiaphas was high priest 18A.D.-36A.D. His father-in-law Annas had been high priest 6A.D.-15A.D. and was still called high priest by many. This explains why two men at this time had the title.

The meeting was nothing less than a meeting of the Sanhedrin and they realized that their plan must be postponed till after the Feast was over and the crowds dispersed. They noted Christ’s popularity with the people and judged it would not be safe to act before this.

While these activities were going on, the Lord arrived at the home of Simon whom He had obviously cured of leprosy. Simon was a very common name and it is useless to try to identify him as some have done. In the same way they have tried to identify the woman that approached the Lord Who was reclining at the table. Some have said she was Mary Magdalene, or the sinful woman in Luke. vii. These are just guesses. What is stressed is the very expensive ointment she brought with her and anointed the Lord’s head. This must have involved a great personal sacrifice, and was an indication of her devotion and gratitude for what the Lord had done for her.

However, the effect on the disciples was very different. They became angry and said “Why this waste?”. It is interesting to note here that “waste” is *apoleia*, sometimes translated destruction, perdition, perishing, and here used in a non-doctrinal sense. It is evident that the values of the disciples and the woman were very different. To the disciples the ointment was measured in terms of money; for the woman it expressed the value of the Lord to her. It does not say much for the effect on the disciples of three

years fellowship with the Lord, if they judged that to anoint Him in this way was just “waste”!

At least Christ recognized the woman’s gift at its true value. He said:

“She has done a beautiful thing to Me When she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her” (Matt. xxvi. 10-13, N.I.V.).

The woman alone had understood what the Lord had repeatedly said about His approaching death. The lesson for all of us is that real love is expressed by *deeds* not just *words*. What a different place this world would be if this were constantly put into action!

The Betrayal of Judas.

While this was happening, Judas Iscariot slipped away and went to the high priests to try to strike a bargain with them to betray the Lord. This was a gift to Christ’s enemies, for it would make the arrest of the Saviour easier. Judas asked what they would be willing to give him and they agreed upon thirty pieces of silver (see Zech. xi. 12). If an ox gored a servant, the owner had to pay this amount (Exod. xxi. 32). *It was the current price for a slave*. What a contrast this was to the woman we have just considered! She poured the most expensive oil upon the Lord’s head, whereas Judas sold his Master for a sum that was paltry by comparison. From this moment, Judas watched for a suitable opportunity to carry out this treacherous deed (Matt. xxvi. 16).

In dealing with the last week before the crucifixion, we are faced with a number of difficulties. According to some expositors the events as detailed in the four Gospels cannot be reconciled. But before we decide that this is so, we should take care that the difficulties are not of our own making. There are a number of facts to be considered. Those who have *The Companion Bible* should consult Appendix 156. The researches of Dr. Graham Scroggie are helpful too.

In Matt. xii. 40 the Lord Jesus asserted that as Jonah was *three days and three nights* in the sea monster, so the Son of Man would be *three days and three nights* in the heart of the earth. One must also consider the phrase “after three days” (Matt. xxvii. 63, 64; Mark viii. 31; ix. 31, R.V.; x. 34, R.V.; John ii. 19), and also the passages which speaks of “the third day” (Matthew xvi. 21; xvii. 23; xx. 19; xxvii. 64; Luke ix. 22; xiii. 32; xviii. 33; xxiv. 7, 21, 46; Acts x. 40; I Cor. xv. 4). These two expressions mean the same thing as is clear from Matt. xxvii. 63, 64 which says, “We remember that that impostor said while He was yet alive, ‘*after three days* I will rise again’. Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure until *the third day*”.

We must remember that the Jews reckoned any part of a day as a whole day, and this is used to explain how Christ was reckoned to be in the tomb three days, starting with Friday. However, when the number of nights is stated as well as the number of days, the expression ceases to be an idiom and becomes a literal statement of fact. There were not

three nights between Friday evening and Sunday morning by any process of reckoning. The expressions “*after three days*” which occurs five times (see above occurrences), and “*three days and three nights*” cannot be explained by this Jewish custom.

We must also remember that the Jewish days are reckoned from sunset to sunset, 6p.m. to 6p.m., not midnight to midnight as ours are. Taking the above facts into consideration we arrive at the following:

Wednesday,	Nisan (April) 14th,	the crucifixion.	
Thursday,	Nisan 15th,	the Passover Sabbath.	(???)
Friday,	Nisan 16th,	the embalmment.	
Saturday,	Nisan 17th,	the weekly Sabbath.	
Sunday,	Nisan 18th,	the Resurrection.	

This gives “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt. xii. 40).

<i>14th Nisan</i>	<i>15th Nisan</i>	<i>16th Nisan</i>	<i>17th Nisan</i>
Passover and Preparation. The Lord crucified. Body hastily buried.	A High Day. A Sabbath. No servile work. “The Sabbath past” (Mark xvi. 1).	Preparation Day. The spices bought and prepared when the Sabbath was past.	Weekly Sabbath. The women rested on this Sabbath day and went to the sepulcher soon after it had passed.

Hebrew day	1st night	1st day	2nd night	2nd day	3rd night	3rd day	4th(???) night

Every Sabbath had its Preparation Day, so we must be prepared for *two Preparation Days*. One refers to the “high day”, the Sabbath immediately following the Passover, the other referring to the regular weekly Sabbath.

There are other facts to be considered. If it is true that Christ died on Friday at 3p.m. and was buried before 6p.m. because the weekly Sabbath began at 6p.m. on Friday and lasted until 6p.m. on Saturday—then, within those three hours the following twenty events must have taken place:

- (1) The deputation of the Jews to Pilate (John xix. 31).
- (2) Pilate heard their request and must have verified it.
- (3) Soldiers came and brake the legs of the two thieves and pierced the side of Christ (John xix. 32, 34).
- (4) After this Joseph of Arimathaea went to Pilate and asked for the Lord’s body (John xix. 38; Mark xv. 43).
- (5) Pilate called a centurion and asked if Christ had been dead any while (Mark xv. 44).
- (6) The centurion made enquiries, reported to Pilate who then gave a permit to remove the body (Mark xv. 44, 45).
- (7) Joseph went to the market and bought fine linen, which could not be done with speed (Mark xv, 46).

- (8) Joseph then went to Golgotha with linen and permit and presented the latter to the centurion on duty—.
- (9) Having received permission to move the body, Joseph with help took down and covered the body with the cloth and carried it to Joseph's tomb (Mark xv. 46; Matt. xxvii. 59, 60; Luke xxiii. 53).
- (10) Women from Galilee followed after (Luke xxiii. 55).
- (11) Joseph, with help, would remove the much soiled cloth and wash the body of its blood stains, after which it was wrapped in a single clean linen cloth without spices (Matt. xxvii. 59; Mark xv. 46; Luke xxiii. 53).
- (12) The body was then laid in Joseph's new tomb (Matt. xxvii. 60; Mark xv. 46).
- (13) During these operations the women watched, but did not help (Matt. xxvii. 61).
- (14) Joseph and his friends rolled a great stone across the mouth of the tomb and departed (Matt. xxvii. 60; Mark xv. 46).
- (15) The women returned to the city, having seen how the body was laid without embalming (Luke xxiii. 55).
- (16) Nicodemus, unknown to the women, had procured a great quantity of expensive spices and with these made contact with Joseph (John xix. 39).
- (17) The women went to the market and bought raw materials for spices which they prepared (Luke xxiii. 56).
- (18) Joseph and Nicodemus returned to the tomb, rolled away the stone, took off the single linen cloth in which the body was wrapped and wound the limbs and the body in a number of bandages with spices (John xix. 40). Then they wrapped the whole corpse in a single linen sheet and the head separately in a napkin, and put the body back in place (John xx. 7).
- (19) The stone was rolled again across the mouth of the tomb, and the men departed.
- (20) The women, having prepared the spices, rested on the Sabbath (Friday 6p.m. to Saturday 6p.m.) (Luke xxiii. 56).

On the first day of the week (Saturday after 6p.m.) very early in the morning*, the women came, bringing the spices they had prepared (Luke xxiv. 1). [**very early in the morning* -- this can only refer to Sunday 5a.m.+/- onwards—DHC.]

Surely it must be admitted, all this could not have taken place *within three hours*. No part of it could be done on Saturday, for that was the weekly Sabbath. The markets were all closed and nothing could be bought and no labour hired.

We must remember that the Sabbath of John xix. 31 was not the weekly Sabbath, but one earlier in the week connected with Passover, a "high day". So there were two Sabbaths in that week *and the high day Sabbath being confused with the weekly Sabbath, has led to all the confusion as to when Christ was crucified*. Exod. xii. 3-8 regulates that the Passover must be offered on the 14th day of the month. Straight away followed the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the 15th day, and this day was a Sabbath (Lev. xxiii. 6, 7). By this calendar, instead of having three hours only, from 3p.m. to 6p.m. on Friday for these twenty events, there were the three hours on Wednesday and the whole of Friday. Thursday and Saturday could not be used being Sabbaths. Joseph must have hurriedly buried the Lord's body on Wednesday before 6p.m. and he, with Nicodemus, would embalm it on Friday. The markets were open on this day and the women would be able to buy what spices they wanted.

The above facts do not solve all the problems of Holy Week, but they clear up several which occur in the orthodox view.

There is another interesting point. In the New Testament passages which record the taking of the body from the cross and wrapping it in linen cloth, the word *sindon* is used which was one piece of linen (Matt. xxvii. 59; Mark xv. 46; Luke xxiii. 53; and compare Mark xiv. 51, 52). But in the passages which describe the embalming, the word *othonion* is used, which means a linen bandage, and in each occurrence it is plural, linen cloths (*othonia*) and is associated with the spices (Luke xxiv. 12; John xix. 40; xx. 5-7). The Lord's head was bandaged separately, consequently at the resurrection the risen Lord passed through the bandages leaving them in their separate places. It was this that struck the Apostle John when he first came into the tomb and convince him of the resurrection (John xx. 6-9).

The tradition of Good Friday as the crucifixion day has provided much capital for infidel arguments and many apparent contradictions which undermine confidence in the truth of the Word of God. We can be thankful to be released from this tradition. Of course the *day* of the Lord's death in no way affects its virtue. What matters first and last is that *He died for us who are believers* and this is the solid and unalterable ground of our salvation and certain hope.

The Passover Meal.

We must be careful not to confuse the Paschal Supper with the festival that followed it as is so often done. The *Supper* was a memorial of the redemption of the firstborn of Israel on the night before the Exodus; the Feast of the next day was the anniversary of their actual deliverance from the bandage of Egypt. The Supper was not part of the Feast, but was the basis on which the Feast was founded. The word "Passover" became a popular designation of this period of time which includes the preparation day (the term used for the day before the Sabbath or the Passover Feast), the Feast itself and Unleavened Bread that followed it. Mark xiv. 12 records, "And on the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed (killed) the passover . . .". Luke xxii. 7 confirms this and so does Josephus (*Ant.* 14:2,1 and 17:9,3), "the feast of unleavened bread *which we call the Passover*".

Passover and Unleavened Bread, although two separate feasts, were traced as one. Unleavened Bread followed immediately after Passover. The disciples came to the Lord and asked Him where they should prepare the Passover (Matt. xxvi. 17). Christ's answer was to direct them to a certain man, who, according to Mark xiv. 13 and Luke xxii. 10 was carrying a pitcher of water, and to tell him that He wished to celebrate Passover with His disciples at the man's house (Matt. xxvi. 18, 19).

While they were reclining and eating the meal, the Lord Jesus made a statement that must have been like a bolt from the blue:

“. . . . And while they were eating, He said, 'I tell you the truth, one of you will betray Me.'" (xxvi. 21, N.I.V.).

The disciples were shocked. They evidently did not suspect Judas Iscariot for they asked, "Surely it is not I?". (The Greek expected the answer, No). The Lord's reply was, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with Me will betray Me". They had all done this, but the language means that one of these who had eaten bread with Him had violated the rules of eastern hospitality by betraying Him. Eastern people are emphatic on this point. Eating someone's bread ties the hands and compels friendship. (Compare Psa. xli. 9 with David's similar experience and note the words "did eat of my bread"). Judas tried to bluff it out by asking the same question (Matt. xxvi. 25). Christ's reply seems indeterminate, "thou hast said" (A.V.). But in the original it means, as the N.I.V., "Yes, it is you". We are not told of Judas' reaction, for he evidently left the room at this point (John xiii. 24-30).

The Lord now proceeds with the meal. He takes one of the hard flat Jewish loaves and breaks it so that each might have a piece, saying, "Take and eat; this is My body" (Matt. xxvi. 26). "Then He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." The N.I.V. in a footnote says, "some manuscripts have *the new* (i.e. before the word "covenant"). In Luke's account (xxii. 19, 20), the words are inserted, as they are in I Cor. xi. 24, 25. There can therefore be no doubt that the Lord used the words "the new covenant", and this can only refer to Jer. xxxi. 31-37. A covenant is an agreement between two parties and here they are clearly stated—Jehovah on the one hand and Israel and Judah on the other, just as they were when the old covenant of law was instituted (Exod. xxiv. 8).

In seeking to expound this passage, the churches have forgotten this and mountains of wrong doctrine have been erected on their varying ideas. The Lord Jesus asserts that His shed blood is "for the forgiveness of sins". The words of Prof. A. T. Robertson are to the point here:

"This clause (the remission of sin) is in Matthew alone, but it is not to be restricted for that reason. It is the truth. This passage answers all the modern sentimentalism that finds the teaching of Jesus only pious ethical remarks or eschatological dreamings. He had the definite conception of His death on the cross as the basis of forgiveness of sin." (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, pp. 209, 210).

The bread and the wine symbolized His body and blood. The figure *Metaphor* is used here, for He held the bread and wine in His hands. Obviously His physical body was already present so that the bread and wine could only be *symbols* of that body. Yet the ritualist ignores this fact and invents the myth of these symbols being His literal body and blood, thus not only deceiving himself, but millions of other people as well. The figure of speech used here is very common. When we point to a map and say "this *is* America", or to a photograph and say "this *is* my father", no one misunderstands. The Lord Jesus used this figure many times when He said, "I am the door", "I am the true vine", "You are the salt of the earth", etc., where in each case the verb to be means "represents".

The New Covenant made with Israel is ratified here by His shed blood (His atoning death), and it is the solid basis for Israel's redemption in the future and the setting up of the Messianic kingdom (Rom. xi. 26-29).

New Things.

“Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. xxi. 5).

pp. 75 - 79

In the old days we were told to ‘make do and mend’. Certainly, things were made to last, and as money was scarce we could not afford to throw things away if they would serve after repair. Times have changed, and to keep the wheels of industry turning businessmen must sell more and more. So there is the term ‘planned obsolescence’, and we are encouraged to throw things away and buy new. Even if they are not worn out they are out of date. However, we are now beginning to realize how great is the waste, and thought is being given to a way of using the material instead of losing it. We hear of ‘recycling’; for example, we collect waste paper which can be used to make new paper.

Jeremiah was told to go down to the potter’s house where he saw the potter at work. A vessel he had made was marred, so he made another vessel out of the clay (Jer.xviii.4). The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah:

“Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in Mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation ... turn from their evil, I will repent ... if it do evil in My sight ... I will repent of the good ...” (Jer. xviii. 6-10).

The history of the children of Israel shows how often they departed from the Lord to serve idols. How often the Lord had to punish them! The promises of the covenant still hold good, but as the time passes, as Peter says, many ask the question “Where is the promise of His coming?” (II Pet. iii. 4). When will the kingdom be set up? When will the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob fulfilled?

The need of Israel is a change of heart. When John the Baptist preached, he called for repentance. How will the kingdom come? If we refer to Jer. xxxi., we can learn how the Lord will work. In the past the Lord has had to pluck up, or throw down, or destroy, but a change of heart will make such a big difference. The Lord will watch over Israel to build, and to plant (Jer. xxxi. 27, 28). Instead of a conditional covenant, the Lord will make a new covenant with Israel, which will be an unconditional covenant. He will put the law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts. “I will be their God and they shall be My people” (Jer. xxxi. 31-33). When David sinned, he prayed “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Psa. li. 10). This is a picture of what will happen to Israel.

In the O.T. for example, in the Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, there are prophecies telling of God’s intentions for Israel. In the N.T., particularly in Revelation, we see pictures of how those prophecies will be fulfilled.

Ezekiel speaks of the new heart which Israel will be given:

“And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you: and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh” (xi 19).

“Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (xviii.31).

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart ...” (xxxvi. 26).

The word “new” occur four times in Jeremiah. The outline of the four references is interesting:

- A | xxvi. 10. The new gate of the Lord’s house. Jeremiah’s prophecy rejected.
- B | xxxi. 22. The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth.
- B | xxxi. 31. I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel.
- A | xxxvi. 10. The new gate of the Lord’s house. Jeremiah’s prophecy rejected.

The meetings at the new gate, where the prophecy of Jeremiah was considered, led up to statements by the Priests in the first case showing their rejection of Jeremiah’s message, and in the second case, when a book containing a record of Jeremiah’s prophecies was presented to the king, it resulted in the king throwing the book on the fire. But in Jer. xxxi. 17 we read, “And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord”, and as we have seen, God will make a new covenant with Israel and give them a new heart and a new spirit.

The prophecy that there will be a complete change, and that Israel after returning to the Lord will be restored and be God’s people, is a cause for rejoicing and thanksgiving. So the Psalmist reacts by exhorting Israel to sing a new song and to praise the Lord. Psalms xcvi.-xcix. in each case show that the picture is the return of the Lord to this earth and God’s reign beginning:

- A | xcvi. 1. O sing unto the Lord a new song.
- B | xcvi. 13. He cometh to judge the earth.
- C | xcvi. 1. The Lord reigneth.
- A | xcvi. 1. O sing unto the Lord a new song.
- B | xcvi. 9. He cometh to judge the earth.
- C | xcix. 1. The Lord reigneth.

See other references: Psalms xxxiii. 3; xl. 3; cxliv. 9; and Isa. xlii. 10.

We quoted Jer. xxxi. 22 above, “for the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth”, and as we study the book of Isaiah we find other similar statements. “Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. Sing unto the Lord a new song ...” (Isa. xlii. 9, 10). Then, in Isa. xliii. 19, he says again “Behold I will do a new thing: now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert”.

Another reference is in chapter xlvi., but the whole chapter needs to be read. Although Israel is obstinate God still pleads with them, and for His own name’s sake He will not cut off Israel. We will quote a few verses:

“Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, ‘Mine idol hath done them and my graven image and my molten image, hath commanded them’. Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have shewed to thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, ‘Behold, I knew them’.” (Isa. xlviii. 4-7).

So Isaiah emphasizes that the new things that will be declared are entirely new, and those new things are a creation of God. Israel would like to pretend that they knew those things from the beginning, but God will keep them secret until the right time comes, when He will reveal the new things that He will create.

It is in Isaiah that we read that Israel will be given a new name, “which the mouth of the Lord shall name” (Ixii. 2). We read that God’s people will not be called “Forsaken” neither will the land be called “Desolate”:

“... but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married” (Isa. Ixii. 4).

Lastly, there are two references in Isaiah to new heavens and a new earth. The first is Isa. Ixv. 17 and the second in Isa. Ixvi. 22. We quote Ixv. 17:

“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind”,

and the following verses describe the blessing and the joy which will be enjoyed. There will be no more weeping nor the “voice of crying” (19).

In the N.T. we find that the “overcomers” will be given a white stone in which is written a new name (Rev. ii. 17). In Rev. iii. 12 the overcomers will become pillars of the Temple, and the name of God and of the city of God (New Jerusalem) will be written on them. The verse ends “and I will write upon him My new name”.

In Revelation we also read of a new song, a new heaven and a new earth, and the last statement is “Behold, I make all things new”. The outline of the use of the word “new” in Revelation is as follows:

- A | ii. 17. A new name (overcomers).
- B | iii. 12. New Jerusalem (comes down from heaven).
- C | iii. 12. My new name.
- D | v. 9. A new song (Worthy is the Lamb).
- D | xiv. 3. A new song (144,000).
- C | xxi. 1. A new heaven and a new earth.
- B | xxi. 2. New Jerusalem (coming down from God out of heaven).
- A | xxi. 5. I make all things new (overcomers, verse 7).

We see in II Pet. iii. 13 reference to a new heaven and a new earth. In John xiii. 34 our Lord said, “a new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another”. See also I John ii. 8.

The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, declares that God “hath made us able ministers of the new testament (covenant)” (II Cor. iii. 6). He also writes about our being reconciled to God by Jesus Christ and about the ministry of reconciliation. He states that if we are in Christ, we are a new creation (A.V. creature); all things are become new:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (II Cor. v. 17).

See also Gal. vi. 15.

To conclude, we have two further references in Ephesians:

“For He Himself is our peace, Who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in His flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in Himself *one new man* out of the two, thus making peace” (Eph. ii. 14, 15, N.I.V.).

The first reference is in the ‘doctrinal’ section of Ephesians, but the second is in the ‘practical’ section. It reads:

“You were taught ... to put off your old self ... to be made new (A.V. be renewed) in the attitude of your minds; and to *put on the new self* (A.V. the new man), created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. iv. 22-24, N.I.V.).

Space does not permit us to enlarge on this important theme and we refer our readers to *Letters From Prison* by Stuart Allen, pages 49-52 (the new man), and page 94 (put on the new man).

Our Standing in Christ Jesus.

pp. 71 - 74

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit is no guile”
(Psa.xxxii.1,2).

The apostle Paul suffered much and had many diverse experiences: yet he was always rejoicing. His state of mind is reflected in the words “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. iv. 4).

We have to admit that we do not always rejoice. We do not always radiate that joy and gladness which should characterize the Christian. To what extent is this due to a lack of faith? If we hold firmly to the faith, and have no doubts about our standing in Christ Jesus, should this not be reflected in our daily lives?

Where are doubts likely to arise?

Firstly, if we have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we should not doubt our salvation. Some may say, “There are times when I do not feel saved”. Do we rely for our salvation on our feelings? Or is our faith based on the finished work of Christ? Our feelings, like the weather, vary from day to day. It may be that our health or circumstances cause us to feel ‘down’ at times, and if we tend to rely on our feelings, we shall be unstable.

David knew what it was to feel ‘down’ at times. He had sinned and he confessed his sin in Psa. li. In verse 12 of that Psalm he prays, “Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free spirit”. Our salvation is certain and sure, but we may not always experience the joy of our salvation.

Secondly, our failure to rejoice every day may result from the problems of the pilgrim pathway. The classic example is the experience of Israel as they wandered for forty years in the wilderness. Were they always happy? Was their faith firmly based on the word of God? There are summaries of Israel’s experiences in the Psalms, such as Psa.cvi.&cvii. Our personal lives may differ from the wilderness journey of Israel, but there may be a parallel. We may face the problem of meeting our material needs, or we may be worried about health; either our own health or that of a near relative or friend. If the burden seems too heavy for us it is not easy to “Rejoice”; but cannot we ride through the storm more easily if we have complete faith in the providential care of our Heavenly Father?

The object of this article is to consider the ‘facts’. What is our standing? What are the conditions (or facts) that do not change with the varying experiences and circumstances of the pilgrim pathway? If we can establish the ‘facts’, we may have a firm foundation on which to build, and we shall not be tossed to and fro as we encounter daily problems.

The gospel message is very clearly set out in a leaflet written by Stuart Allen (*What is a Christian*) many years ago. Among the texts quoted is John iii. 16, and probably this verse is the first that comes to mind when we are asked to set out our faith. In this article we are looking at the evidence contained in Paul's letter to the Romans. He points out that the Jews were under the Law, but the Gentiles were led by conscience. He concluded that both Jew and Gentile were sinners. In Rom. iii. 10 he quotes from Psalm xiv., "There is none righteous, no, not one". We will quote from Rom. iii. 21-26:

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

As we read the above, we note that our own righteousness is of no avail. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags ..." (Isa. lxiv. 6). God's perfect righteousness is offered to all. It is "unto all". Alas, some will not accept this wonderful offer, so Paul adds "and upon all that believe". Then, note that God declares His righteousness in forgiving our sins. He is just, and the justifier. Jesus Christ shed His blood, He paid the price of our redemption, and therefore He is just when He forgives us.

So, when we 'face the facts', we see that however unworthy we are, we have been justified freely by His grace. His work is finished and complete and we cannot do anything to make His work more effective. We may not 'feel saved' but we must not add our feelings to the finished work of Christ. The debt that was ours has been paid in full, so that all that is left for us to do is to "Rejoice in the Lord".

Our debt was in respect of sins that we have committed. But sins are the fruit of the root cause of our sins. The root cause is sin itself. Eph. ii. 2 refers to the sons of disobedience, and that disobedience took place in the garden of Eden. The death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ cancel both sin (arising from the disobedience of Adam) and our own individual sins. Paul writes:

"For since by man came death,
by man came also the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die,
even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. xv. 21, 22).

In writing to the Romans (see chapter v.) Paul states that by one man sin entered into the world, and sin brought death, so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned. He argues that as by the offence of one, all are condemned; by the righteousness of one comes justification of life to all who are believers in Christ.

Paul goes further in showing that we are identified with Christ in His death and resurrection. If we study the epistle to the Ephesians, we read that we have been

quicken together with Christ, we have been raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. ii. 5, 6). We quote a few verses also from Romans vi.:

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin” (Rom. vi. 3-7).

If we continue to read this chapter, we come across the sentence, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin”, and we might pause to consider the word “reckon”. It is the translation of the Greek *logizomai* which is translated in various ways, such as *impute*, *reckon*, *count*, (see *The Berean Expositor*, Vol. LI, p.201). For example, Rom. iv. 3 states that Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Rom. iv. 8 quotes Ps. xxxii. “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin”. After writing about Abraham, Paul says:

“Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. iv. 23-25).

Thus, as Abraham believed God and it was counted for righteousness, so our faith can be counted for righteousness. We reckon that we died with Christ and are dead unto sin (Rom. vi. 11). We enjoy a new life in Christ. The flesh (or the old man or old nature) is counted as dead, and we live in the Spirit, or put on the new man, or enjoy a new nature.

But while we believe we have been completely changed, we are conscious that we sometimes exhibit characteristics of the flesh or old nature. Paul admits that the flesh and the spirit are contrary to each other, as we find in Rom. vii. 14-25. For example he writes:

“For I know that in en (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom. vii. 18, 19).

Paul exclaims “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” He replies, “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord” (24, 25).

So we read in Rom. viii., about life in the Spirit. As a result of the life and sacrifice of our Lord, we are free from the law of sin and death. If we mind the things of the Spirit, we are spiritually minded and have life and peace. We are “in Christ”, but Romans viii. 10, 11 speaks of Christ being in me, and His Spirit dwelling in me. Above all, in Rom. viii. 35-39 Paul confirms that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

Thus he ends with a note of confidence. Having admitted the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, which continues while we are in this present body, we are assured that in the sight of God, the flesh is dead and we share the resurrection life with Christ.

Our standing in Christ is therefore secure. Our feelings must be ignored for the work of Christ is complete. We are saved by grace through faith and our salvation is the gift of God (Eph. ii. 8). And should we be worried about material things we should see what Paul writes in Phil. iv. 10-14. May we say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ Who enables me".

May our faith be strong and let us thank God for our full and free salvation. May we be strengthened so that we enjoy life in the spirit, being led by the Spirit of God day by day (Rom. viii. 14).

Prison Experiences

No.2. Joseph and his brethren. pp. 95 - 99

“So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God ...” (Gen. xlv. 8).

Israel sent Joseph to his brethren to find out if all was well with them, but as he approached them they plotted against him, and discussed how they might get rid of him. Reuben spoke up for Joseph and suggested that instead of killing him, they should put him in a pit close by, thinking that later he could rescue Joseph. But Reuben’s plan was thwarted as the brothers soon saw some traders coming. Judah proposed selling Joseph for twenty pieces of silver, and the deal was made. Thus Joseph was on his way to Egypt.

This reminds us that when Jesus was a child, He took refuge in Egypt when His life was in danger. Also Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver. Charles Welch points out that Judah, when translated into Greek, becomes Judas, and so there is another similarity in the story.

Joseph was sold to Potiphar, who was an officer of Pharaoh and a captain of the guard. We read that the Lord was with Joseph (Gen. xxxix. 2) and he was a prosperous man. An old translation of this reference reads “The Lord was with Joseph and he was a luckie fellow”. He became an overseer in the house of Potiphar and was in complete control of all his possessions, both in the house and outside, in the fields or grounds. But the wife of Potiphar eyed Joseph and tried to tempt him. Although Joseph showed he did not wish to comply with the wishes of Potiphar’s wife, she continued to try to engage him and one day, while trying to entice him, she held on to his garment. Joseph immediately ran away but the wife held on to his garment. Then she called the servants and said that Joseph had assaulted her. When Potiphar returned to the house, she again accused Joseph and of course, Potiphar was very angry. Joseph was sent to prison where the king’s prisoners were bound. But once more we read “The Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy” (Gen. xxxix. 21). The keeper of the prison viewed Joseph with favour and gave him authority over the other prisoners and we read:

“The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.”

But Joseph was being punished for a sin which he did not commit.

One of the malefactors, who was crucified with Christ said:

“Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done nothing amiss” (Luke xxiii. 40, 41).

And to complete the malefactor's statement, let us quote a verse from Isaiah:

“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes, we are healed” (liii. 5).

The next event, recorded in Gen. xl., is that Pharaoh was angry with his butler and his baker. They were placed in prison with Joseph and were in his charge. Both had dreams but neither of them could interpret them. The butler told the details to Joseph and he explained the meaning, that in three days, he would be restored to his previous employment. This good news cheered the baker who then plucked up courage to tell Joseph about his dream. The interpretation was not favourable in his case, for in three days, the baker would be hanged. Joseph asked the butler to remember him when he saw Pharaoh and he hoped that he too might secure his release. However, the butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him (Gen. xl. 23). The figure of three in this part of the story reminds us that Christ was three days and three nights in the grave.

We read that at the end of “two full years” (Gen. xli. 1) Pharaoh also had dreams, which he related to his magicians. They were unable to interpret them. The chief butler remembered how he had dreamed while in prison and how Joseph had given the interpretation. He said to Pharaoh, “I do remember my faults this day” and he told Pharaoh his story and how Joseph knew the meaning of his dream. So Pharaoh gave the order for Joseph to be released, and he brought to him. Joseph was hurried out of prison, given a change of clothes (and a shave), and brought to Pharaoh. Then Pharaoh told Joseph about his two dreams, the first being about seven fat kine which were eaten by seven lean kine, and the second, about seven full ears of corn which were eaten by seven thin ears of corn.

Joseph explained that there were to be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine and he continued to advise Pharaoh of the steps he should take to store food in the years of plenty, so that provision could be made for the famine which was sure to follow. Pharaoh immediately said that Joseph was the man to organize the storing of the corn and he gave Joseph a high position and authority to undertake his new duties. He was second only to Pharaoh and only in the throne was Pharaoh greater than Joseph. So Joseph rode in the second chariot and as he went, there was a cry before him, “Bow the knee”.

We read that Pharaoh gave Joseph a new name, Zaph-nath-pa-a-ne-ah and then in Gen. xli. 46, we are informed that Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh.

Luke iii. 23 gives the age of our Lord at the beginning of His earthly ministry as “about thirty years”. One of His titles as given in John vi. 48 is the “bread of life”. Joseph's new name means “the abundance of life”. He had been sent by God to preserve life. Thus, Joseph began his ministry of supplying the bread of life (natural food) when he was thirty years old, and Jesus Christ began His ministry of supplying the spiritual food, the true bread of life, when He was about thirty years old. The record that Joseph went about in his chariot as the cry went before him “Bow the knee” reminds us of

Philippians ii. 10 which read “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth”.

At the end of seven years of plenty, Joseph had stored huge quantities of corn, so much that it became impossible to keep a record of the stock that had been accumulated. Then came the famine and Joseph opened the storehouses and began to feed the people. At first the people paid in cash, but as money ran out, they paid in cattle, and then Joseph took over land on behalf of Pharaoh.

The famine extended “over all the face of the earth” and so Jacob and his sons began to be in need of corn. Jacob, having heard that there was corn in Egypt, told his sons to go there to buy for their urgent needs. In Gen. xlii. 6 we read that “Joseph’s brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth”. So Joseph’s dreams came true. Joseph recognized his brothers but they did not realize that the governor was Joseph.

The whole story of Joseph, his treatment of his brothers and the way he tested them is contained in three chapters. It would spoil the narrative to attempt to recount it very briefly. It is evident that the brothers were uneasy in Joseph’s presence and they discussed their position in their own language, not realizing Joseph could hear and understand what they were saying. For example, in Gen. xlii. 21, the brothers were saying to each other, “We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us”. This was exactly what Joseph wanted to hear. He wanted them to repent of their evil deeds (see also Acts iii. 19 where there is the plea by Peter for the repentance of Israel so that Jesus Christ could return).

So after testing his brothers, the time came when Joseph could no longer contain himself. He dismissed all the servants so that he could be alone with his brothers. Then he made himself known to them. What a shock for the guilty brothers! But Joseph hastened to reassure them. Let us read Gen. xlv. 3-8:

“And Joseph said unto his brethren, ‘I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?’. And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, ‘Come near to me, I pray you’. And they came near. And he said ‘I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you as a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt’.”

Joseph was put into prison for a charge of which he was innocent. The Lord was with him in every experience, both when he was in prison and later, when he was released to appear before Pharaoh and interpret his dreams. The prison experience was a link in the chain of events, leading to his being the one who provided food in the days of famine. “It was not you that sent me here”, said Joseph, “but God”.

What appeared to be a time of hatred and of trial, was in fact the beginning of a plan for the salvation of the whole family.

Joseph was a type of Christ and the brethren represented the nation, or children, of Israel. Joseph was rejected by his brothers who said “Shall thou indeed reign over us?” (Gen. xxxvii. 8). They hated him without a just cause. He was cast into a pit. He was sold for twenty pieces of silver. For two whole years the children of Israel were separated from Joseph, but then his brothers repented and Joseph manifested himself to them.

Christ was hated without a cause. He was betrayed and sold for thirty pieces of silver. The children of Israel rejected Christ and would not repent, and so Israel were set aside for a period which may be represented by the two years, which could be the picture of 2,000 years. But Christ, we know, will one day appear and be made manifest. “They shall look on Me Whom they have pierced” (Zech. xii. 10).

Note: There is an interesting article in The Berean Expositor, Vol. XII, pp. 36-39, which includes the following features:

- (1) The Repentance of Israel
- (2) The Revelation of Israel
- (3) The Restoration of Israel
- (4) The Resurrection of Israel

No.3. Samson and the Philistines. pp. 105 - 110

“The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (I Sam. xvi. 7).

In our second article, we have seen that Joseph had been accused of a wrong that he had not committed, and so was sent to prison. At the end of the story, we saw that God was in charge, and it was God Who ordered the events so that Joseph could be the means of saving life.

As we consider people who had prison experiences, it is remarkable that many suffered for their faith, or for the truth. We would expect a large proportion would have been sent to prison as a punishment for wrongdoing, but the references in the Scriptures concern chiefly those who were given a task to do, or a message to deliver, which needed courage and for which the prophet had to suffer.

SAMSON. We read the story of Samson in Judges xiii.-xvi. He judge Israel for twenty years (xvi. 31), so it is clear that in these four chapters only the most important events have been recorded.

The children of Israel “did evil in the sight of the Lord”, so the Lord delivered Israel into the hand of the Philistines for a period of forty years.

There was a man of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah, and his wife was barren. The Angel of the Lord appeared to his wife, and told her that she should have a son. She was instructed to drink no wine nor strong drink, for her son was to be a Nazarite from the very first day of his life. No razor was to be used on his head, and his God-given task was “to begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines” (xiii. 5).

The Angel of the Lord appeared a second time and confirmed to Manoah that his wife should indeed have a son, and he repeated the instructions given to his wife. Manoah wanted to entertain the angel, thinking the angel was a man. The Angel refused to eat the meal that Manoah prepared but the Angel said it would be acceptable if the meal were offered as a burnt offering to the Lord. As Manoah carried out the wish of the Angel, the flames ascended from the altar and then the Angel ascended to heaven in the flame. So Manoah and his wife knew that the messenger was not a man, but an Angel of the Lord.

In the following chapters we read of the exploits of Samson and there are numerous examples of his great strength. He was so strong that he slaughtered many Philistines.

The cause of Samson’s downfall was his love of Philistine women. In chapter xiv., we read that Samson went to Timnath and fell in love with one of the daughters of the Philistines. He returned to his father and mother and asked them to arrange a marriage with the woman. His parents rebuked him saying “Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?” (xiv. 3). But Samson insisted and he had his own way.

At the marriage feast, Samson asked a riddle, “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness”. He gave seven days for the answer, but after three days no one had any idea of the solution. The thirty companions threatened the bride that if she did not tell them the answer, they would burn her and her father’s house with fire. She wept before Samson until he revealed the secret. After killing thirty men to secure thirty changes of garments to satisfy his debt, he returned to his father’s house in a fury.

Because Samson had left his wife, the bride’s father gave her to a friend of Samson. So when Samson returned and announced his intention of being with his wife, her father would not allow him to see her. This annoyed Samson so much that he set fire to the cornfields, vineyards and olives which belonged to the Philistines. In their turn, the Philistines were angry and burnt the wife and her father. Samson said “Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease” (xv. 7). So Samson slaughtered a great number of Philistines.

Then the Philistines came to the men of Judah and called for Samson. At that time, Samson had gone to Etam. Three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam and told Samson that they had come to bind him and deliver him to the Philistines. Samson agreed that they could bind him on one condition, that they would not attack him when he was bound. The men of Judah agreed not to harm Samson when he was bound.

Samson was bound with new cords and taken to Lehi, where the Philistines were waiting. But the Spirit of the Lord “came mightily on Samson and the cords became soft and melted. In this way Samson was freed. He picked up the jawbone of an ass and slew a thousand Philistines. So the story of Samson continues, but we cannot repeat all the details. We pass to the last stage that is recorded in the book of Judges.

Samson fell in love with a Philistine woman named Delilah, and as might be expected the Philistines kept in close touch with her with the object of capturing Samson. They offered her money if she would betray him.

The lords of the Philistines told Delilah to find out what the secret of his enormous strength was. The full details are given in Judges xvi.

Samson told Delilah that if he was bound with green withs (or fresh bowstrings), he would be as weak as any other man. But when the Philistines brought the bowstrings and Samson was bound with them, when Delilah called “The Philistines be upon thee”, Samson broke free and so his strength was not known.

Then Samson said that new ropes would make him weak, but they did not prevent him from breaking free.

A third trial was made by weaving his seven locks of hair and securing it with a pin. He was asleep, but at the usual call that the Philistines were upon him, Samson broke free and walked away with the pin of the beam still in his hair.

Delilah kept worrying Samson and declared that he really did not love her, as each time the secret was not revealed. Finally Samson, weary of her continual questioning, told Delilah that he was a Nazarite and that it was a condition that no razor should come upon his head. If his hair was cut and his head shaven, he would then be like any other man. So Delilah made Samson go to sleep on her knees, so that a man could come and shave him. Then once more she called the Philistines, and Samson not realizing what had happened, awoke and shook himself as at other times, but his strength was gone. The Lord had departed from him. He was as weak as any other man.

So the Philistines captured him, put out his eyes so that Samson became blind, put him in prison, bound him with fetters of brass, and there he ground corn.

But his hair began to grow again.

The lord of the Philistines decided to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon, who, they believed, had delivered Samson into their hands. So a great number of men and women, including the lords of the Philistines, gathered together in a large house. The immense size of the house is indicated by the statement that there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women (xvi. 27). As the people made merry, they called for Samson so that he could amuse them. Samson was brought out of prison to please the people, and as he stood before them he said to the boy who was leading him, "Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them".

Then Samson called upon the Lord:

"O Lord God, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes",

and Samson took hold of the two pillars which supported the house, and he prayed:

"Let me die with the Philistines."

He bowed himself with all his might and the house fell upon the lords of the Philistines and on all the people, so that in his death he slew more people than he had killed in the whole of his life.

When Samson was born, the Angel said that he would "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines". This objective was to a great extent achieved, but Samson was betrayed by the woman he loved and so became blind and was placed in prison. He did not obey his father and mother who advised him to marry one of the daughters of his own race. Instead, he sought one who was a daughter of the Philistines; the enemy against which he had been called to fight.

Then he loved Delilah and possibly Delilah loved Samson, but she was bound to be on the side of the Philistines, and consequently she could not be faithful to Samson when the future of the Philistines was involved. It was therefore natural that Delilah should support her own nation, and when a large sum of money was offered as a bribe, she could hardly refuse. As a Nazarite, no razor should have been used to shave Samson's head, though it must be admitted that he was asleep when this took place. Samson loved Delilah and trusted her.

In reading the story, we may be surprised to find that Samson trusted her after she had made three attempts to betray him. But he had full confidence in his strength and did not contemplate the possibility of his hair being cut off. Samson was betrayed, and we may remember the words of the apostle Paul in II Cor. vi. 14, 15 when he told the Corinthians not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

We are told very little of Samson's life in prison. As he ground the corn he had plenty of time to reflect on his condition, and the circumstances which had brought him to his present state. He may have thought about the advice he had received from his parents, and the risks he had taken in becoming involved with women associated with the enemy.

We may criticize Samson and regard his betrayal as evidence that he was a failure, or at least, a partial failure,

“But the Lord seeth not as man seeth.”

There is another point of view expressed in the epistle to the Hebrews:

“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets; who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Heb. xi. 32-34).

So Samson is listed among those who lived a life of faith. No mention is made of his shortcomings. He was “to begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines”. And he did make such a beginning.

No.4. Micaiah. Hoshea. Hanani. pp. 137 - 140

“What the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak” (I Kings xxii. 14).

MICAIAH. After the death of Naboth, Elijah proclaimed God’s judgment upon king Ahab, who then repented, rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth. Because Ahab humbled himself before the Lord, the evil which God had determined was postponed until the next generation.

In I Kings xxii. 1 we read that for three years there was no war between Syria and Israel. The king of Judah was Jehoshaphat, and he came down to the king of Israel. The two kings discussed the situation with Syria. The king of Israel pointed out that Ramothgilead ought to be held by Israel, but they had never gone in to possess it. So the king of Israel asked the king of Judah if he would join with him in battle against Syria.

Jehoshaphat was 35 years old when he began to reign and he reigned 25 years in Jerusalem. He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, although he did not halt the sacrifices offered in the high places. But clearly, Jehoshaphat did not want to do anything or engage in any enterprise unless he was assured of the blessing of the Lord.

So Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel “Enquire, I pray you, at the word of the Lord today” (xxii. 5). The king of Israel gathered his prophets together, 400 of them, and asked them whether he should go up to Ramothgilead to battle, or not. All the prophets said “Go up: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king”.

Jehoshaphat was not convinced, for he knew that the prophets were not prophets of the Lord. So he said “Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him?” The king of Israel said that there was yet one man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, by whom they might inquire of the Lord, “but I hate him for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil”.

Now the two kings, wearing their robes, each sat on their respective thrones, and listened to the 400 prophets as they prophesied. The messenger who fetched Micaiah told him that the 400 prophets were saying, “Go up and prosper, for the Lord will deliver it into the king’s hand”. And the messenger urged Micaiah to say the same words as the 400 prophets. But Micaiah said “As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak”.

When they arrived at the place where the two kings were seated, Micaiah was asked whether they should attack Ramothgilead or not. Micaiah repeated what the 400 prophets had said; “Go up and prosper, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king”. The king realized that Micaiah was just repeating what the 400 prophets said, so he replied “How many times must I adjure you to tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?”.

So Micaiah began to tell the king of Israel the truth, how he saw Israel scattered upon the hill. “These have no master; let them return every man to his house in peace” (17). This was a prophecy of the death of Ahab, for he would be killed, and there would be a proclamation “Every man to his city and every man to his own country” (36).

The king of Israel said to the king of Judah, “Did I not say that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?” But Micaiah continued his declaration to the king of Israel. We will quote from the A.V.:

“And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And He said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee” (19-23).

The king of Israel ignored all the advice which Micaiah gave him, and he gave instructions that Micaiah should be carried back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king’s son. Micaiah was to be put in prison, fed with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until Ahab returned in peace. But Micaiah answered the king: “If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me. Hearken, O people, every one of you”.

So Micaiah was put in prison for telling the truth, and faithfully delivering the message of the Lord. The prophecy of the 400 lying prophets was accepted, and the one

true prophet was rejected. The full account of the battle is given in I Kings xxii., which records how Ahab died, and how the word of the Lord was fulfilled.

HOSHEA. We read of Hoshea being involved in a conspiracy in II Kings xv. 30. The king of Assyria fought against the king of Israel and took a number of cities, and all the land of Naphtali. Hoshea (the son of Elah) made a conspiracy against Pekah (king of Israel), and killed him. He then reigned in his stead.

When we come to II King xvii. 1, we are told that in the 12th year of Ahaz, king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah began to reign in Samaria over Israel. His reign lasted only 9 years. He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; however it is added “but not as the kings of Israel that were before him”. Young’s Concordance contains a note about Hoshea. It says “The nineteenth, last, and best king of Israel”.

The king of Assyria fought against Israel again, and Hoshea was subdued and became a servant to the king of Assyria. He had to render tribute to him and it seems that Hoshea was responsible for the collection of tribute from the king of Egypt; he sent messengers to Egypt for this purpose. Once more Hoshea was involved in a conspiracy. Messengers were sent to Egypt but no tribute reached the king of Assyria. When the king of Assyria realized that Hoshea had been dishonest, he caused Hoshea to be bound and confined to prison (xvii. 4).

Then the king of Assyria besieged the land and took Samaria. The people of Israel were carried away in captivity to Assyria and placed in Halah and in Habor by the river Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. So, because the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord and served other gods, the judgment of the Lord fell upon them and they began a period of captivity.

Hoshea’s prison experience was a punishment for his conspiracy and dishonesty, but it was the worshipping of idols and Israel’s turning away from the One and True God that was the cause of their going into captivity.

HANANI The Seer. The king of Judah enjoyed a period of peace, and we read in II Chron. xv. 17 that although the high places were not taken away (where idolatry was practiced), the heart of Asa (king of Judah) was “perfect all his days”.

Then, we read in II Chron. xvi. 1 that Baasha, king of Israel, began to invade, and to build Ramah, with the object of blocking any communication with Asa, king of Judah. So Asa sent a present to Benhadad, king of Syria, who was at Damascus, invoking an agreement for mutual aid, and asked him to break his league with the king of Israel. Benhadad agreed, and sent his troops against the cities of Israel, and in consequence Baasha discontinued the work of building at the town of Ramah.

Then Hanani, the seer, came to see Asa, king of Judah, with the word of the Lord. Let us read from II Chron. xvi. 7-9:

“Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, He delivered them into thine hand. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.”

These words caused Asa to be very angry, so much so that he sent Hanani to prison. His rage extended to others as Asa oppressed a number of the people.

So Hanani is another prophet who suffered for declaring the word of the Lord faithfully. He needed much courage to convey such an unpopular message, and to declare God’s judgment to Asa. To tell Asa that he was foolish in that he did not rely on the Lord his God, and would suffer in consequence, was a disagreeable task for the prophet Hanani.

He was faithful in his ministry, and he told the truth. But he suffered for it.

No.5. God’s servants imprisoned for speaking the truth. pp. 193 - 197

The Offence of the Truth. In writing to Timothy, Paul refers to those who “resist the truth” (II Tim. iii. 8) and to those who “turn away their ears from the truth” (iv. 4). When we read John vi. 59-66, we observe that some of the doctrines proclaimed by our Lord were described by many disciples as “hard” and could not be understood. Jesus Christ then asked them, “Doth this offend you?”. The result was that many of His disciples “went back and walked no more with Him”.

A study of prison experiences and the study of those where offended by the truth shows that the two subjects are linked, so far this article we turn aside to look at the offence of the truth. When studying the experience of Micaiah, the writer turned to The Companion Bible, and in looking at I Kings xxii. 27 where we read “Put this fellow in the prison ...” a note was found which read, “**One of the eleven rulers offended with God’s servants, for speaking the truth**”.

“But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart and he would not let them go” (Exod. x. 27).

On referring to Exod. x. 28, there was a note which gave a list of the eleven rulers (or kings) who were offended by the truth. Some went to prison as a result of their faithfulness, but others did not suffer in the same way. But all knew what it was to be

rejected because of their faithfulness to the truth. We will list the eleven scriptures and will only make brief comments.

Exodus x. 28. Moses pleaded with Pharaoh for the release of the children of Israel, but in spite of the many plagues Pharaoh would not let them go. Before the last plague Moses saw Pharaoh, and in the end his heart was again hardened and he refused to let the people go. He told Moses to depart and not return, for otherwise he would be killed. Moses agreed with Pharaoh, “I will see thy face no more”. So Pharaoh rejected the word of the Lord and he also rejected Moses.

Numbers xxiv. 11. Balak was king of the Moabites. He had heard of the defeat of the Amorites and that Israel had taken over their land. Also that Og, king of Bashan, was defeated and killed. When the children of Israel moved forward and pitched in the plains of Moab, Balak was terrified, and he decided to approach Balaam for help. He was requested to curse Israel, so that in battle Moab could defeat them. We read that “the elders of Moab departed with the rewards of divination in their hand” (Numb. xxii. 7). God told Balaam not to go with these messengers, neither should he curse Israel for God had blessed them. Balaam did go with the men, and many efforts were made to persuade Balaam to curse Israel. There is also the story of the donkey who spoke to Balaam, see Numb. xxii.-xxiv. In trying to persuade Balaam, Balak said, “Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: for I will promote thee unto very great honour ...”. Each time Balaam was asked to curse the people, he blessed them, and in the end Balak lost patience with Balaam. Balak said “I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour”. So, although Balaam took some risks in not obeying the Lord—he did go with the messengers—Balaam did maintain a true witness in blessing Israel. So he and his message were rejected by Balak, and he did not receive the promised honour from Balak.

I Kings xiii. 4. Jeroboam, king of Israel, made two golden calves and set one of them up in Bethel. He ordained a feast and made offerings on the altar and burnt incense. A man of God came from Judah to Bethel and cried against the altar. He said that the priests of the high places would be offered on that altar. As a sign that this would happen, he said the altar would be rent and the ashes poured out. Jeroboam heard what the man of God had said and held up his hand against the man, crying “Lay hold on him”. His hand dried up and he could not move it. Then the altar was rent and the ashes poured out. Afterwards, Jeroboam asked the man of God to intreat the Lord for him that his hand be restored, and the king’s hand was restored. The king offered a reward which the man of God refused.

Jeroboam at first did not believe the word of the Lord and was going to punish God’s servant; but the judgment of God, in causing his hand to wither, preserved the man of God. Nevertheless, the first reaction was the rejection of the word of God and the man of God.

I Kings xxii. 27. As we have already considered the experience of Micaiah, we will only quote the verse that is listed in The Companion Bible:

“Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace.”

Thus king Ahab did not believe the prophet and thought he would return safely. He rejected the word of God and also the prophet Micaiah.

II Kings v. 12. Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man and a mighty man, but he was a leper. The Syrians had taken captives from the hand of Israel including a little girl. As a result of her testimony, Naaman went to Elisha hoping that he would cure him of his leprosy. We quote:

“And Elisha sent a messenger unto him saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in rage” (II Kings v. 10-12).

His servants came to him and persuaded him to obey the prophet, so Naaman dipped himself seven times in Jordan and was cleansed. There was an initial rejection of the word of God spoken through the prophet and Naaman turned from Elisha in a rage, thus rejecting Elisha. The whole narrative, including the judgment of leprosy that fell on Elisha’s servant Gehazi, is recorded in II Kings v. 1-27.

II Chronicles xvi. 10. We have already given a brief account of Hanani the seer. The king of Judah feared Israel and asked Syria for support. Hanani told Asa, king of Judah, that he had been foolish and in future he would have wars. II Chron. xvi. 10 reads:

“Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time.”

Again, the word of God, and his prophet were both rejected, and the prophet put in prison.

II Chronicles xxiv. 21. Joash was 7 years old when he began to reign and he reigned 40 years in Jerusalem. He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord while Jehoiada was priest. A collection was made and the temple repaired. Jehoiada died aged 130 years.

The princes of Judah then came to Joash, king of Israel, and persuaded him to leave the house of the Lord God of their fathers and to turn to idols. God was angry with Judah and Jerusalem and He sent prophets, but they refused to listen.

“And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the Lord, He hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord” (xxiv. 20, 21).

II Chronicles xxvi. 19. Uzziah was 16 years old when he began to reign and he reigned 52 years in Jerusalem. He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. He was very successful and “God helped him against the Philistines”. A long list of his achievements is given in chapter xvi., but he became proud and transgressed against the Lord by going into the temple to burn incense. Azariah, the priest, followed Uzziah into the temple accompanied by 80 other priests of the Lord, and they withstood the king, saying that incense must only be offered by priests who were the sons of Aaron. The king had trespassed. Uzziah was wroth and he held a censer in his hand to burn incense, but as the king opposed the priests and was angry, leprosy rose up in his forehead. The priests thrust him out of the temple, but when the king realized he was a leper he also himself hastened to leave the temple.

Jeremiah xxvi. 21. Urijah was a prophet who prophesied against Jerusalem and against the land of Israel in agreement with all the words of Jeremiah. When the king heard what he had prophesied he sought to kill him. So Urijah fled to Egypt. The king sent men to Egypt who brought Urijah back to the king, and he slew him with the sword.

Jeremiah xxxii. 3. The king of Babylon sent his army to besiege the city of Jerusalem and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the house of the king of Judah. The prophet was shut up because he had said that the Lord would give the city to the king of Babylon.

Matthew xiv. 3. John the Baptist had told Herod that it was not lawful for him to marry Herodias, so Herod put John in prison. He would have put him to death, but he feared the people. John was executed later as Herod had promised the daughter of Herodias a reward for her dancing according to her wish. She consulted her mother and asked for the head of John the Baptist. The faithful witness of John the Baptist was rejected, as was John himself.

So in all eleven cases we find a similar feature, that the word of God delivered by His faithful servants was rejected, often in anger, and the prophet himself suffered rejection, and sometimes prison, or even death.

Random Thoughts

No.2. Christ the Wisdom of God. pp. 15 - 17

“... in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God ...” (I Cor. i. 21).

The word ‘wisdom’ (Gk. *sophia*) occurs 51 times in the N.T. Dr. E. W. Bullinger in his book *Number in Scripture* writes that 51 is the number of Divine Revelation. We observe that $51 = 3 \times 17$, and Dr. Bullinger says that the number 3 “stands for that which is solid, real, substantial, complete and entire”. He points out that 17 is a significant number, being the sum of two perfect numbers 7 and 10, which are indicative of spiritual and ordinal perfection respectively. He therefore states that 17 is the number of “the perfection of spiritual order”.

One third of the occurrences of *sophia* (i.e. 17) are found in the first epistle to the Corinthians. On two occasions Paul refers to the wisdom of God. For example, he writes:

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (I Cor. ii. 7, 8).

There are two references to the Lord Jesus Christ as the “wisdom of God”, and because of our union with Christ we enjoy the privileges which He confers on us. These two references are:

“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (I Cor. i. 23, 24).

“... that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (i. 29-31).

The majority of the 17 references tend to be negative, referring to the wisdom of this world, the words of men’s wisdom, or the wisdom of words, etc. Space does not permit us to quote them all, but we give a selection which shows how misleading our own wisdom may be.

“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent’. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (I Cor. i. 17-21).

The wisdom of this world does not lead us to Christ; it is a remarkable statement that, in the wisdom of God, we do not come to a knowledge of Him through our own wisdom; but God in His grace blesses the preaching of His Word to those who believe the good news, and are saved.

When the apostle Paul came to Corinth he did not display his own wisdom, neither did he try to impress them by his style of speech. This is what he wrote:

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (I Cor. ii. 1, 4-5).

Paul’s comment that “your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” is worthy of consideration and meditation. To become a Christian, no certificates of education or university degrees are required. An uneducated person can hear and believe the gospel. The exercise of simple faith does not depend on earthly wisdom. The Holy Spirit enlightens the mind and shows the need of a Saviour, and the power of God is at work when the gospel message is received. As we come to a realization that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God (I Cor. iii. 19), we long for true wisdom. Our need then is Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

There are two sides in this transaction: the part we play, and the part taken by God. The Lord asks us to believe and accept the gift of life through His Name. On the other hand, we would not be inclined to think about the gospel message unless the Holy Spirit revealed the truth to us. Paul says that “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (I Cor. xii. 3).

When our Lord was on this earth, He began to “upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not” (Matt. xi. 20). After mentioning several cities including Tyre, Sidon, and Capernaum, which did not repent, He made the following remarkable statement:

“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight” (Matt. xi. 25, 26).

In Paul’s second letter to Timothy, he warns against striving about words to no profit, and against profane and vain babbling. Some had caused confusion by saying that the resurrection had already taken place. Paul then shows the two sides of truth:

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal:

‘The Lord knoweth them that are His’ and

‘Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity’.”

(II Tim. ii. 19).

James wrote, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, That giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” (James i. 5, 6).

When Paul prayed for the Ephesians, he desired that they might have the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened. So let us close by joining with Paul in his prayer:

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened (*‘having been enlightened’*—see Charles Welch’s *In Heavenly Places*, p.156); that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph. i. 17-20).

No.3. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. pp. 31 - 33

“be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. xii. 2).

When Paul wrote to the Colossians, he said “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col. iii. 16). This is excellent advice, for if our minds are concentrated on heavenly things, and if we commune with our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, surely this must affect our daily life. Our thoughts are like seeds which produce actions. Our Lord explained that a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things. The evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil things (Luke vi. 45). In both Colossians and Ephesians we have references to what we were by nature, and what we are now by the grace of God:

“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to represent you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight” (Col. i. 21, 22).

In chapter ii. of Ephesians, Paul writes that in time past we walked according to the course of this world. He refers to the children of disobedience and describes the old manner of life, the desires of the flesh and of the mind; but through the rich mercy of God and His great love for us, we were quickened with Christ, raised up with Him and made to sit together with Him in the heavenly places.

In Ephesians there are several occurrences of the Greek word *dianoia*, which is translated “understanding”, although it is more often translated “mind”:

“... walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph. iv. 17, 18).

So here we have the state of unbelievers whose understanding is *darkened*, whereas by way of contrast the prayer in chapter i. is for “the eyes of your understanding being *enlightened*, that ye may know ...” (Eph. i. 17, 18).

But the Greek word used more frequently is *nous*, which is sometimes translated “understanding”, but more frequently rendered “mind”.

In Eph. iv. 17 we quoted the phrase “the vanity of their mind”, and once again we have a contrast as we read:

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Eph. iv. 23).

Paul in his epistles does not hesitate to warn against those whose minds are corrupt or defiled. Here are some brief extracts:

“Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth” (I Tim. vi. 5).

“So do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith” (II Tim. iii. 8).

“But unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure: but even their mind and conscience is defiled” (Titus i. 15).

“Vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind” (Col. ii. 18).

“God gave them over to a reprobate mind” (Rom. i. 28).

In Rom. vii. 14-25 Paul describes the strife between the flesh and the spirit. He often did things that he did not want to do, and the good things He wished to do, he failed to do. He found a law that when he would do good, evil was present with him (21). He delighted in the law of God after the inward man, but in verse 23 he says that he saw another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind. Later he says, “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin” (25).

In Rom. xii. 2 Paul gives some practical advice. We should not conform to the fashion of this world, but we need to be transformed so that we know what is the will of God. Our desire is to live according to His will. So our minds must be renewed. The whole verse reads thus:

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Two other references to understanding (mind, *nous*) may be mentioned. In Luke.xxiv.45, after the record of the walk to Emmaus, when the risen Christ revealed Himself to the two disciples, we read that the disciples met in a room in Jerusalem and again Christ Jesus appeared. After speaking to them and explaining the Scriptures, He opened their understanding (minds) that they might understand the Scriptures.

The other reference is to the peace of God which passeth understanding:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all

understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. iv. 6, 7, N.I.V.).

We have been studying references to the mind, but we find that sometimes in the A.V. the word “understanding” is used. This leads us to think of the understanding as well as the mind. There is a Greek word that occurs seven times in the N.T., and is translated “understanding” six times, and “knowledge” once. So let us conclude our random thoughts by reading four of the references:

“... by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my *knowledge* in the mystery of Christ)” (Eph. iii. 3, 4).

“We also ... do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual *understanding*; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing” (Col. i. 9, 10).

“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of *understanding*, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ: in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. ii. 2, 3).

“Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee *understanding* in all things” (II Tim. ii. 7).

Behind these four references is the prayer that the Lord will grant an understanding of His plan and purpose and His will, and that after we have received the revelation of His will we might walk worthy of our vocation. The source of all knowledge and understanding is the Lord in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

No.4. Knowledge shall be increased. pp. 197 - 200

“and knowledge shall be increased” (Dan. xii. 4).

If instead of jotting down some random thoughts on knowledge, we attempt to make a systematic study, we should have to review about 100 passages of Scripture in the O.T. and approximately 40 in the N.T. In these short articles, however, we will be content to choose just a few texts which we hope will provide a little food for thought.

The first time we read of knowledge in the Scriptures is in connection with the garden of Eden. God had planted a garden and in it placed Adam. He caused trees to grow in the garden and a river ran out of it to water the ground. In the midst of the garden was the tree of life, and God also planted a tree called the “tree of knowledge of good and evil”. God instructed Adam to dress and keep the garden, and told him he could eat of the fruit of the trees except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

When we reach Gen. iii. we find that Adam and Eve did eat of the forbidden fruit: the great disobedience had taken place. Their eyes were opened and they knew both

good and evil. This knowledge that they had acquired was a doubtful asset: it brought a new responsibility. Adam and Eve had the power of choice and already they had made one wrong choice. Now that they knew good and evil they had the problem of choosing in future between what was good and what was evil. If evil things were dressed up to look attractive, how easy it would be to make the wrong choice! So man was now in great danger. Already he needed a saviour and redeemer.

In the book of Daniel we read of many visions, and the interpretation that he was able to make of them. When we reach chapter xii., we are reading of the time of the end, and Daniel is told to seal the book with the prophecies until the time of the end. Daniel was told "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (xii. 4). In the present days this has become remarkably true. Travel is easier and many indeed travel all over the world with great swiftness. Knowledge also has certainly been increased. There are so many examples of this that comment is unnecessary. One result of this increase in knowledge is that we can manufacture items with a much smaller work force, and so our knowledge produces, or at least contributes to, high unemployment. But we do not seem to have the wisdom to solve the unemployment problem.

The book of Proverbs contains many references to knowledge: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. i. 7). The wise man warns his son about sinners and pleads with him not to be enticed by their evil suggestions, "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets" (i. 20), but those enticed do not heed the advice given: "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scornors delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" (22). "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded" (24). But in chapter ii. the wise man turns to his son with advice if he is willing to receive the words of wisdom. If the ear is inclined to wisdom, and the heart to understanding, then the prayer will be answered and "thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God" (ii. 5). Solomon adds:

"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: to deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh forward things" (Prov. ii. 10-12).

In Ecclesiastes, the Preacher exclaims "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity". Having had experience of knowledge and wisdom, he arrives at the conclusion that no joy or happiness is obtained by the acquisition of knowledge. Yet, in the end he decided that the people ought to be taught knowledge. Here are the two conclusions:

"And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (Eccles. i. 17, 18).

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity. And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth" (xii. 8-10).

When we turn to the N.T. we find that about half the references to knowledge are in Paul's letters to the Corinthians. The first comment Paul makes shows that he regarded

knowledge as highly desirable, but he was writing about the grace of God given them through Jesus Christ. He thanks God on behalf of the Corinthians for the grace of God which he says:

“... is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you” (I Cor. i. 4-6).

In chapter viii. there are five references to knowledge in connection with eating things offered to idols. Some believers did not have the same knowledge as the members of the church at Corinth. In verse 7 he says, “Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge”. Paul opens chapter viii. with the remark, referring to things offered to idols, “we know that we all have the knowledge” but he immediately adds the warning, “Knowledge puffeth up, but charity (love) edifieth”. This warning is repeated in that wonderful chapter xiii., which we should always bear in mind:

“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (love), I am nothing” (I Cor. xiii. 2).

“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away” (xiii. 8).

We should remember that it is the knowledge of the Lord that is vital, for if we get to know Him our whole personality is affected. Paul described this as a “sweet savour of Christ”:

“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ ...” (II Cor. ii. 14, 15).

The apostle Paul told the Corinthians that he did not preach himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord. God, Who caused light to shine out of darkness “hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (iv. 5, 6). Paul was prepared to count everything he had as loss in order that he might gain the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. He wanted to “win Christ” and he desired to “know Him” (read Phil. iii. 4-14).

Another statement that is precious is found in Colossians, “In Whom (Christ) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. ii. 3).

Finally, we come to the prayer in Eph. iii., where Paul prays that we may be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. Again we have an emphasis on love (charity). May we also be rooted and grounded in love, and comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and

“to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God” (see Eph. iii. 16-21).

The Right Time.

“and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther iv. 14).

pp. 212 - 217

The remarkable story of Mordecai and Esther is told in the book of Esther. King Ahasuerus was displeased with Queen Vashti who has disobeyed him, and after careful consideration a royal commandment was issued, declaring that Vashti was no longer Queen. A search was then made for young and fair virgins from whom the king could select one to be the next queen.

Mordecai was a Jew, being among those who were carried away from Jerusalem by the king of Babylon. Esther was the daughter of Mordecai's uncle but her father and mother were dead, and Mordecai had taken Esther and treated her as his own daughter. She was one of the virgins selected, and eventually was taken into the royal house where she made a favourable impression on the king, and all in the king's house. Esther found favour in the eyes of King Ahasuerus, and in due course the crown was placed on her head and she was declared queen.

In chapter iii. we read about Haman who found favour also in the eyes of the king, and he was advanced to a position above all other princes.

Haman knew that Mordecai was a Jew and no doubt Mordecai knew that Haman was an Agagite. The Agagites were a tribe of the Amalekites and there was enmity between the Agagites and Israel. When the king's servants bowed before Haman and did him reverence, Mordecai did not comply with the formality, no doubt because of the feeling of enmity. When Haman realized the attitude of Mordecai, he began to plot against him, and prepared the way in his conversations with the king. He told the king that there were certain people who obeyed laws different from the laws of the kingdom which Ahasuerus ruled; these people were disobedient, not recognizing his rule and should be destroyed. The king agreed and gave Haman his ring, so that he had authority to pass laws to give effect to his plan that the Jews would be exterminated. Scribes were told to prepare letters setting out the instructions and they were to be circulated among the 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia.

When Mordecai heard of Haman's plan and the order to kill the Jews, he put on sackcloth with ashes and came before the king's gate, although it was against the law to dress that way and sit at the king's gate. There was great mourning in every province with fasting, weeping and wailing.

Esther could not understand why Mordecai was dressed in sackcloth and ashes, so she sent messages to him. He sent her a copy of the decree so that she would know what had happened. He also sent a message to Esther asking her to speak to the king on behalf of the Jews.

Esther replied that if anyone came into the king's court without being called by the king, that person would be put to death unless he held out the golden scepter. She also told Mordecai that the king had not called her for the last thirty days.

Then Mordecai sent a further reply to Esther which we quote:

“Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, ‘Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?’” (Esther iv. 13, 14).

Esther called all the Jews to fast for three days and she and her maidens would likewise fast. Then she would approach the king and “if I perish, I perish”.

But when Esther, dressed in her royal robes, stood in the king's court, the king held out the golden scepter and received her. She was very diplomatic, for Haman was still held in high esteem by the king, so she had to move slowly and discreetly. She asked the king, with Haman, to attend a banquet which she would arrange. The story unfolds gradually throughout chapters v.-ix. which we cannot relate in detail owing to lack of space but in the end, the king realized that Haman had plotted against Mordecai who had been faithful to the king. Mordecai was advanced and Haman was put to death; letters were sent to the 127 provinces reversing the previous orders, and the Jews were saved from persecution and murder.

Esther was raised up to protect and defend the Jews. She was indeed appointed queen “for such a time as this”. Her coronation as queen was timed perfectly for her to act on behalf of the Jewish nation. It was the “right time” for such an appointment.

The coming of Jesus Christ to this earth, and all the details of His life on earth were according to God's plan and happened at the “right time”. Paul writing to the Galatians confirms this:

“But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. iv. 4, 5).

It is evident that Paul believed that God sent forth His Son at an appointed time; he says that when the fullness of the time had come God sent His Son, but he does not enlarge on this statement.

In the first chapter of Matthew, we have details of the generations of Jesus Christ, starting with Abraham. At the end of the long list we have the comment:

“So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations” (Matt. i. 17).

One wonders why Matthew suddenly introduces this verse before describing the birth of the Lord Jesus. His method of counting presents a problem, and a note in *The Companion Bible* (page 1308) reads, “three fourteens are reckoned in a special manner”. One can only conclude that Matthew desires to draw attention to the fact that the birth of Christ took place at a special time, after three groups of fourteen generations. Surely Matthew believed that Christ came to this earth at an appointed time.

In the Gospel of John we notice the phrase “Mine hour has not yet come”, or “The hour is come ...”. For example, Christ told His mother when attending the wedding in Cana of Galilee that His hour had not yet come. In John vii. 30 and viii. 20 when Christ was in the Temple, “no man laid hands on Him, for His hour was not yet come”.

However, beginning at chapter xii. we see that instead of a negative statement, the remark is now positive. After Jesus had ridden to Jerusalem on a young ass, some Greeks wanted to see Him, and He answered:

“The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified” (xii. 23), and in the next chapter:

“Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end” (xiii. 1).

Just as the birth of Christ happened at the appointed time, so His departure from this earth took place at the appointed time. In the account of the transfiguration we read:

“and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke ix. 31, A.V.).
“They spoke about His departure, which He was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem” (Luke ix. 31, N.I.V.).

His death, or departure, was no accident, but the fulfillment of a plan carried out at the right time.

Our Lord spent some time in teaching the disciples and because He was Emmanuel (God with us), He knew what would happen in the future. For example, as they approached Jerusalem, He told them that He would be betrayed, ill-treated and crucified, and the third day He would rise again (Matt. xx. 17-19). On another occasion He said that no man could take His life from Him. He had the power to lay it down and the power to take it up again (John x. 18).

He also knew that the disciples would forsake Him and be scattered:

“Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me” (John xvi. 32).

The next chapter, which contains the wonderful prayer of our Lord, commences:

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, ‘Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee’.” (John xvii. 1).

The Lord knew that the appointed time for His departure had come, although it is remarkable that He does not refer to His great suffering and His death but speaks of His glorification. While on this earth He had glorified the Father, and He finished the work which the Father had committed into His hands (4).

We do not know when the second advent will take place, but we are sure that Christ will come again, at the right time, but at a moment known only to the Father:

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Matt. xxiv. 36).

It would be interesting to seek other examples to illustrate how God intervenes at the right time; for instance the life of Joseph, who told his brothers that God sent him before them to preserve life. But space limits us, so we suggest that our readers make their own investigations of Scripture. In addition, it may be profitable to review events in our own lives where the providence of God, and His guidance, have met our needs at just the right time. If we have been blessed by God in this way, we should give thanks to Him and also tell others for their encouragement.

“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so” (Psa. cvii. 2).

The writer became Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the Berean Forward Movement following the death of Mr. Frederick P. Brininger in 1947. During the war, Mr. Brininger had prepared two books for printing, *Just and the Justifier* and *Parable, Miracle and Sign*. He was unable to get these books printed during the war owing to the paper shortage. We take up the story as recorded in:

JUBILEE!

The Berean Expositor 1909-1959

Although he (Mr. Brininger) had approached many printers, none had the paper to enable them to execute the orders, owing to war-time restrictions. I was therefore asked to approach the Paper Control in Reading. The story is a long one, but briefly it worked out in this way. We obtained a permit for one ton of paper, with the right to call for a further supply later. I estimated that it would cost £1,500 to use one ton of paper, which was sufficient to print two books. We had a Reprint Fund of £800. How could we finance two books? We required at least a further £700. No appeal was made, but I waited for a brief period of about two months in which we received legacies and gifts of £800. Surely this was the hand of the Lord Who supplied the paper and the funds whereby the two books could be published.

This is only one example in the history of The Berean Forward Movement and The Berean Publishing Trust when the Lord supplied our need *at the right time*.

Running Away.

“But Jonah rose up to flee ...” (Jonah i. 3).

pp. 110 - 113

In 1870-1880 voluntary organizations were set up to deal with the problem of children “on the streets”. One society, now known as The Children’s Society, set out to help the “waifs and strays”. The basic problem remains today, for hundreds of children run away from their homes. It is not our object to discuss this enormous problem, but to recognize that in the Bible we find many examples of those who flee or run away. If a complete study were to be made, more than 200 references would have to be consulted.

The prodigal son left home by arrangement, but it seems he made no effort to keep in touch with his family so long as he had money in his pocket. It was only when he began to be in want that he thought of his home. Then he realized his error and repented. He returned to his father in a humble spirit and was accepted.

Onesimus was a runaway slave and Paul wrote a heart-stirring letter to Philemon, his former master, pleading for his acceptance, not only as a slave, but as a brother in the Lord. Paul admits that he was unprofitable, but now, says Paul, he is profitable to both Philemon and Paul. Evidently, Onesimus was converted and became a “brother”. So both the prodigal son and Onesimus became changed men after they had run away and both returned to their respective homes.

One of the earliest examples of a person running away from home is found in Genesis xvi. 4-9. Sarai, the wife of Abram, had no children and it was agreed that Sarai should give her handmaid to Abram so that children should be obtained for the family. The handmaid was Hagar, an Egyptian. But when it became obvious that Hagar was to produce a child, there was jealousy and ill-feeling between the two women. Sarai treated Hagar harshly, and in the end she could stand the persecution no longer, and she ran away. Hagar fled from the face of Sarai, we are told (6). An angel appeared to Hagar and told her to return home and to be obedient to her mistress (9). Hagar did as she had been instructed. The angel told her that she should have a son and his name would be Ishmael. He would be the first among a nation that was too large to be counted. Hagar was not to be blamed for running away, but she was advised the correct way was to go back home and do her duty.

David became popular with the people of Israel, so much so that Saul was jealous. Indeed, Saul hated David and he gave instructions to his servants to kill him (I.Sam.xix.1). Saul tried to kill him by throwing a javelin at him but David was unhurt and escaped; he slipped out of Saul’s presence and fled. He returned to his house and his wife Michal, but Saul sent messengers to watch outside the house, and kill David when he came out next morning. Michal was aware of the plot and let down David from a window, so David escaped (xix. 12). Was David wrong to “run away”? He had been anointed king of Israel. His life was in danger. Surely it was right that David should take reasonable steps to preserve his life in view of his duty to follow Saul as king of Israel.

Similar steps were taken to preserve the life of the baby, Lord Jesus. Herod wanted to kill Jesus, so Joseph was warned by God in a dream to take Jesus and his mother, and flee into Egypt. There they were to stay until the death of Herod. Clearly, it was right and proper that Joseph and his family should run away to Egypt, so that Jesus could grow up and fulfil the will of His heavenly Father.

Moses was also in danger, when Pharaoh heard that he had killed an Egyptian. We read in Exod. ii. 15 that Pharaoh sought to slay Moses and so Moses fled (or ran away) from the face of Pharaoh.

Jonah heard the word of the Lord when he was instructed to go to Nineveh and cry against it. But then we read that Jonah rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord, and went to Joppa where he found a ship going to Tarshish. So he boarded the ship, thinking that he could run away from the Lord's presence. He was wrong for two reasons, (1) It was impossible to flee from the Lord's presence (Psa. cxxxix. 7), and (2) He was disobedient to the Lord. He was to go to Nineveh. But the Lord dealt with the situation and eventually sent him to the city of Nineveh. But when he cried against the great city, he was amazed when the people believed the message and repented. God accepted their repentance and did not destroy the city.

Jonah did not like the first message he was given and so he ran away, but when he did give the message God reversed the plan to destroy the city, and that made Jonah angry. He did not understand his duty as a prophet, neither did he realize that the Lord is gracious and merciful (Jonah iv. 1-4).

Moses at first was like Jonah. He did not want to declare the word of the Lord to Pharaoh. He feared that the people of Israel would not believe that God had sent him. He made many excuses and asked God to send someone else. The Lord was angry with Moses (Exod. iv. 14) but agreed that Aaron could go with Moses and speak, while God would give the message to Moses who would pass it to Aaron.

The ministry of our Lord while He was on the earth had the effect of dividing His hearers into two groups: believers and unbelievers. Such a situation is described in John vi. 64-71. If we go back to verse 60, we find that some disciples said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?". Then, after a further discourse, we read:

"From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?" (John vi. 66-67).

Peter, being the usual spokesman, assured the Lord that there was no other person to whom they could go, because Jesus had the words of eternal life. In view of this assurance, can we be sure that the disciples would never run away? If we read in Matthew the account of the betrayal of our Lord, we find that all the disciples ran away:

"But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled" (Matt. xxvi. 56).

We do not often read about Archippus. It is evident that the Lord had given him a ministry to perform, but no details are given. There must have been a doubt whether he would be true to his task. Was there a temptation to run away from a difficult ministry? The apostle Paul tells him to complete it. We quote:

“And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it” (Col. iv. 17).

When we review what the scriptures tell us about those who either rejected, or at least disliked the word of the Lord, and how disciples left the Lord and no longer walked with Him, we begin to ask the question, ‘Is it possible that some believers could run away from the truth?’. Now, we do not find such a phrase in the scriptures, but we do find statements in the Prison Epistles that are not far from the idea of running away from the truth. In II Tim. ii. 18 we read of those who “concerning the truth have erred”. There are those who “resist the truth” (iii. 8). When we read II Tim. iv. 4 and Titus i. 14 that “some turn away from the truth”, surely turning away from the truth is not very different from running away from the truth.

May the Lord give us grace, that we may obey the injunction given to Archippus, and fulfil the ministry that the Lord has given us.

I SAMUEL

**No.12. viii. 19 - ix. 20.
pp. 18 - 20**

The words of warning, alas, fell on deaf ears:

“Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city” (I Sam. viii. 19-22).

This is a significant reminder of the words of the Psalmist who sums up the reason for the failure of Israel after the Lord had led them out of Egypt and miraculously provided for them as they journeyed towards their promised land: “They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul” (Psa. cvi. 13-15).

When we feel sometimes that the Lord has turned a deaf ear to our prayers, it will be of considerable help to remember this in case we are praying for that which is not right. Also we should remember the words of the Saviour Himself, Who, when praying to the Father said, “nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done”.

The history of Saul.

The history of Saul occupies I Sam. viii. 4 - II Sam. i. 27, and can be divided into three sections, namely:

- (1) I Sam. viii. 4 - xv. 35. The demand for a king. His testing and rejection.
- (2) I Sam. xvi. 1 - xxvi. 25. The anointing of David and his persecution by Saul.
- (3) I Sam. xxvii. 1 - II Sam. i. 27. Saul’s sin and death.

I Samuel ix. opens with details of the family of the man chosen to be the first of the earthly kings of Israel, and then goes on to relate the circumstances under which he met Samuel:

“Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish ... a mighty man of power. And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people” (I Sam. ix. 1, 2).

Saul, a man in the prime of life, was distinguished among his fellow by his great stature and physical appearance. He was the son of a noble and prosperous farmer, living in a small town in the tribe of Benjamin. His father Kish had sent him, together with a household servant, to find some asses that had strayed away from the farm.

The word ‘asses’ in verse 3 signifies she-asses, and were probably valuable breeding stock. At this period in Jewish history the horse was forbidden, consequently asses would be in great demand. They were used not only as a means of transport, but also on the farm for agricultural purposes. They were therefore valuable stock, and Kish would be anxious to recover those that had been lost.

The word ‘servant’ used here in verse 3 is not that of an ordinary farm hand. It has the meaning of a trusted member of the household staff, one on familiar terms with his young master. We read of him giving wise advice to Saul in verse 6, he was in charge of the money (8), and in verse 22 we find that he was treated as an honoured guest at the sacrificial feast at Ramah.

Tradition has handed down the belief that this man was Doeg, the Edomite, referred to in chapter xxi. 9-18. If this is so, then he alone of all the chief captains in Saul’s army dared to slay Ahimelech the priest and his entire household and family for helping David unwittingly when Saul was hunting him down. This act of barbarous cruelty has labeled the man as one of the most callous butchers of O.T. history.

Having searched in vain throughout the whole region, Saul and his companion come near to Ramah, the town where the prophet Samuel lived. Maybe, the tower on the hill, Samuel’s famous residence known throughout Israel, could be seen by them. So the suggestion is put to Saul by his companion that they should go and enquire of Samuel. This may seem a strange thing to do, but it shows the close relationship that Samuel obviously enjoyed among the people. It illustrates also the old prophet’s kindly and unselfish disposition that they should take their problem to him and expect to receive help from him.

In verse 15 we read: “Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear, saying ...”. “In his ear”, literally “had uncovered the ear of Samuel”, indicating the pushing aside of the head-dress in order the more audibly to whisper. References abound in the Scriptures of the need for opened ears to hear the word of God. On eight separate occasions the Lord during His earthly ministry uttered the curious phrase “he that hath ears to hear, let him hear”, and the risen Christ eight times again uses this expression to the apostle John in the book of Revelation. Each of these occasions marks out something of special importance, as being sent to ears that the Lord had opened. Samuel was such a man, and his opened ear received the message from the Lord, as follows:

“Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over My people Israel, that he may save My people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon My people, because their cry is come unto Me” (I Sam. ix. 16).

How wonderfully the grace and kindness of God shine through this verse. His displeasure at the rejection of Him as their King did not provoke Him into turning a deaf ear to their cry of deliverance from the Philistines who were harassing His people. Their request for a king “like the nations” is met by the provision of one so eminently suitable

to be their leader against the Philistine invader. We ourselves may gain some reassurance from this surely, that though we may displease Him by our forgetfulness of Him, yet He will not turn away and be heedless of our cry to Him in time of trouble or difficulty.

On the morrow, as Saul was approaching Samuel we read in verse 17 that God said to Samuel, “Behold the man whom I spake to thee of!”. “Behold the man” brings to mind a significant comparison with the cry of Pilate “Behold your King” as he brought forth Christ to the people (John xix. 14). Saul was accepted with relief. The Lord as the true King of Israel was once again rejected. The words “reign over” in verse 17 is a verbal form more often translated “restrain”, which is an accurate forecast of the stern and severe rule that was characteristic of the reign of Saul—a very sharp comparison with the reign of the One Whose rule will be with true love and justice.

“Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer’s house is. And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me today, and tomorrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart. And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? It is not on thee, and on all thy father’s house?” (I Sam. ix. 18-20).

No.13. ix. 21 - x. 7.
pp. 56 - 58

It may not have come as a surprise to Saul to hear that Samuel, the seer, knew of his coming, or that the asses for which he had been searching had been found, but what was obviously unexpected was to hear the words of deference and high honour concerning him and his father’s house from the lips of Samuel:

“Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?” (I.Sam.ix.21).

Saul would undoubtedly know what the words “the desire of Israel” (20) referred to. Although he was a countryman, living in the territory of Benjamin, and claimed that his father’s house was “the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin”, yet we read in verse 1 that his father Kish was “a mighty man of power (substance)”. It is most likely therefore that they had heard of the intrigue to set up a king over Israel. Samuel, in answer, conducts Saul to a place of honour at the celebration feast, and makes him his guest for the night. In the morning he publicly anoints him before allowing him to return home. The faithfulness of Samuel to God’s words and his obedience in carrying out every detail is plainly revealed in the preparations that had been made beforehand, so that when the man foretold by the Lord to his servant duly arrived, the feast had been prepared and the guests already invited. Even the double portion of honour for the one who should come had been set aside from the sacrifice held at the high place the day before:

“Then Samuel brought Saul and his servant into the hall and seated them at the head of those who were invited—about thirty in number. Samuel said to the cook, ‘Bring the piece of meat I gave you, the one I told you to lay aside’. So the cook took up the leg with what was on it and set it in front of Saul. Samuel said, ‘Here is what has been kept for you. Eat, because it was set aside for you for this occasion, from the time I said, I have invited guests’. And Saul dined with Samuel that day” (ix. 22-24).

I Samuel x.

Saul had been shown the most fabulous honour and deference by the great prophet-judge of Israel. All was now to be revealed to the unsuspecting son of Kish, the unknown Benjamite. The gracious welcome as a distinguished guest, the courteous hospitality at the great man’s house, then Samuel’s long private talk and instruction into the night. The following morning he publicly pays honour to the young man by accompanying him to the outskirts of the city. One arrival there he says to Saul, “Bid the servant pass on before us, but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God”. So we now come to the first verse of chapter x.:

“Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over His inheritance?”.

In the margin of *The Companion Bible*, Dr. Bullinger writes that some ancient scribe accidentally omitted the words, “and thou shalt rule among the people of Jehovah, and thou shalt save them out of the hand of their enemies, and this shall be a sign unto thee, that”, this reading being preserved in the Septuagint and Vulgate. If this is so then the reading from verse 1 to 2 would be as follows:

“Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over His inheritance, and thou shalt rule among the people of Jehovah, and thou shalt save them out of the hand of their enemies, and this shall be a sign unto thee, that when thou art departed from me today, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel’s sepulcher ...”.

So Saul was anointed king of Israel in anticipation. He was set apart and sealed by the oil that God had instructed Moses to be made for the consecration of the high priest at his ordination (Exod. xxx. 23-33).

After his anointing, Saul was given three signs that would happen to him on his way home. These would confirm the honour and dignity placed upon him by Samuel and the anointing as captain of His people. In Eph. i., speaking of the ‘prior-hope’ and inheritance to which his readers had been predestinated, the apostle Paul says, “also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise”. This sealing of the members of the church which is His Body is not confirmed today by any outward signs, or manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit, either ‘prophesying’ as in the O.T. and also gifts of healing, tongues, etc. during the Acts period. We walk by faith and not by sight.

Saul however, not living in this dispensation of the grace of God, evidence and proof of his Divine appointment were given him. Three events would befall him as he and his companion journeyed home at three places that held sacred memories in the hearts of all

Israel. The first would be at the sepulcher of Rachel, beloved wife of Jacob and mother of the warrior tribe of Benjamin to which Saul belonged. There, men would meet him with the news that the lost asses had been found, and that his father was now sorrowing for Saul, saying “What shall I do for my son?”.

Going on from there, the second sign would occur at the terebinth tree of Tabor, where Saul would meet three men carrying gifts on a pilgrimage to God at Bethel: one carrying three kids, another with three loaves of bread, and the third with a bottle of wine. The bottle would be goatskin, and therefore quite heavy. They would offer Saul two of the loaves which he was to accept at their hands.

The third sign would befall him as he approached his home, and would be the most important of the three. It would be at the famous holy place of prayer known as Gibeah, or “hill of God”. As he approached the hill he would be met with a company of prophets coming down from the hill carrying musical instruments and prophesying. It was at this place that Samuel had sited one of his colleges for the training of young men. There were several in different parts of the country, and their foundation was one of the most notable institutions of this noble and patriotic man of God. These educational universities flourished during the period of Israel’s monarchy, and contributed in no small measure to the moral, cultural, and mental development of the people. The arts were cultivated, and music was given special prominence. The four instruments mentioned in verse 5 are the ‘psaltery’, which was a 10-stringed lyre shaped like a ‘V’ and played with the fingers. The ‘tabret’ was a hand drum, or maybe a tambourine. The ‘pipe’—a flute of reed, wood, or horn. The ‘harp’, a stringed instrument larger than a psaltery, and played with a plectrum (a small instrument of ivory, or quill, for plucking the strings). This last meeting would prove a turning point in the life of Saul:

“And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee” (I Sam. x. 6, 7).

“They shall prophesy” and “thou shalt prophesy” in verses 5 and 6 do not necessarily mean “foretelling”, but speaking in the name of the Lord. So the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul as it had done upon Moses and Joshua, and on the men of Israel raised up during the time of the judges. As a result of this Saul was now a changed man, for God was with him.

No.14. x. 8 - 16.
pp. 79, 80

From verse 9 of chapter x. we discover that the three signs duly came to pass, and that God gave Saul a new heart that same day. Before departing from Samuel, however, Saul was told to go down to Gilgal and await seven days for the coming of Samuel, who would then offer burnt offerings and a sacrifice of peace offerings. This first test of the obedience of Saul to the instructions given by Samuel the prophet of the Lord seems to have been completed satisfactorily, although we do not read the sequel. Similar instructions were given to Saul by Samuel later in chapter xiii. 8-14, which seems to read as though it is the sequel to chapter x. 8. It is unlikely to be so, as this second occasion was approximately two years later when Saul's army was being threatened by a very large force of Philistines, and with the delay of Samuel in not coming to Gilgal within the seven days promised, Saul found that his army, losing heart no doubt, was melting away from him. In desperation Saul took it upon himself to offer the burnt offerings and sacrifices; a test of patience which we all need to learn at times. Samuel appearing almost immediately afterwards utters words of censure upon this disobedience, and tells Saul that his kingdom would not now continue, and that God had found a man after His own heart to be captain over His people. This will be dealt with more fully when we come to chapter xiii.

“And Saul's uncle said unto him and to his servant, Whither went ye? And he said, To seek the asses: and when we saw that they were nowhere, we came to Samuel. And Saul's uncle said, Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you. And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not” (I Sam. x. 14-16).

At this stage we see how the coming of the spirit of God into the heart of Saul influenced his behaviour. On his arrival back home it is not his father Kish that is mentioned here, only his uncle Abner. This was the one who later became second only to the king in Israel. He must have been a man of tremendous force and personality, for Saul made him his commander-in-chief, and there is no doubt he was a great soldier and leader of men. As we read of his deeds, we find also that he was a vain and ambitious man, crafty and utterly ruthless, as well as being dishonest. It could be that Doeg the Edomite, Saul's travel companion, in order to ingratiate himself with this influential member of Saul's family would inform him of the honour conferred upon his young master by the prophet Samuel. This information must have whetted Abner's appetite. Abner was the sort of man that could have plotted to put his own son on the throne of Israel.

Be that as it may, we read that Saul gave his uncle no inkling of what transpired between Samuel and himself. The honour conferred on him was very great, and it would have been only human for him to make the most of it on his return. It would have been very easy to boast a little, especially to this swash-buckling uncle of his. The Lord had given him a change of heart though, and led by His spirit he kept his counsel and told him

nothing. In this instance he showed modesty and true humility, but above all he showed wisdom by his silence.

Modesty and true humility are the evidence externally of a change of heart. They are the hallmark of the true believer in Christ. We find the apostle Paul telling the elders of the church at Ephesus “Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind” (Acts xx. 18, 19). The Greek word *tapeinos* used by Paul here is used by him five times in his prison epistles, where it is translated “lowliness of mind”, “humility”, and “humbleness”. Paul uses it also of Christ Himself in Phil. ii. 5-8 “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus ... Who humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”. This is true humility, and we should always bear it in mind lest we be carried away with the gratifying of our own desires and forget the need for “lowliness of mind” in our own high calling. Great love and great blessings from God call forth an equally great response.

No.15. x. 17 - 22.
p. 100

In verse 17 Samuel makes a public proclamation that a national assembly is to be held at Mizpeh. Princes and representatives from every tribe are to be present. Before demonstrating the appointment of Saul as king, he again reminds them of the way in which the Lord God had led them and delivered them in the past, and the folly therefore of rejecting Him and replacing Him by an earthly king:

“And Samuel called the people together unto the Lord to Mizpeh; and said ... Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you: and ye have this day rejected your God, Who Himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto Him, Nay, but set a king over us” (I Sam. x. 17-19).

It seems incredible that these people, who were given so much guidance and instruction by God never learned wisdom from their experiences. They seemed to be bent on their own destruction. But who are we living today that we should condemn them. The same blindness and hardness of heart that separated them from their covenant God separates the people of the nations today from the greater grace of God. It is a demonstration of the fact that the heart of man has not changed one scrap since that day. “We will not have this Man to reign over us” is still the cry today. Man will choose anything but the rule of the Lord Jesus Christ in personal and national life. Civilization has perhaps made us more cosy. Despite education, increased knowledge, scientific invention, etc. the heart of man remains estranged from God.

“And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their

families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found. Therefore they enquired of the Lord further, if the man should yet come thither. And the Lord answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff" (x. 20-22).

When the process of selection, presumably by lot, had finally settled upon the family of Kish and his son Saul, we read that "he had hid himself among the stuff". If this was shyness, then it is with dismay that we observe how Saul, once registering such shyness and humility should turn into the vindictive tyrant he was later to become. It is said truly that absolute power corrupts absolutely.

**No.16. x. 23 - 27.
pp. 118 - 120**

Perhaps Paul shrank from the glare of publicity that he would receive when the fact of his being the chosen king of Israel was made known. He may have recognized that there were some, especially among the princes of the tribes of Israel, who would be affronted that such authority and power should be bestowed on an insignificant person in the small tribe of Benjamin.

No sooner had the announcement been made, than the man himself was found to be missing. This evidently aroused some questioning as to whether the right choice had been made, for we read that a second enquiry was made of the Lord, to which came the reply "he hath hid himself among the stuff". At last Saul was found and brought forward.

"And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king" (I Sam. x. 23, 24).

There is no doubt that there would have been many stalwart specimens in Israel at that time, but Saul towered over them all. David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, later described Saul and his son Jonathan as "swifter than eagles and stronger than lions". Physically speaking Saul was therefore well fitted for the daunting task of tackling their Philistine enemies. Saul's armour would have fitted no-one else in Israel, and David found it a great encumbrance. Perhaps in offering it to him Saul was endeavouring to deter the young lad from going out against such a mighty warrior as Goliath.

God doubtless chose Saul for these physical characteristics, for apart from the Philistines there would be some of the most influential in the land who would be jealous of his appointment and seek to drag him down. So perhaps it is that God chose a man who could look after himself, command the respect of others, and be acceptable to the mass of the people who would naturally be influenced by his physical attributes. Also to a man brought up amid the simple duties of farm life, the intrigues of power and leadership might have seemed daunting, so that it would be necessary for him to

command the respect and admiration of the mass of the people and so counter the “children of Belial” referred to in verse 27.

“Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house” (x. 25).

Just as Samuel had told the people what the “manner of the king” would do to them in chapter viii., so now here he gives them the “manner of the kingdom”. This was probably in the form of a Magna Carta, limiting the prerogatives of the monarch, and doubtless drawing attention to the words of the Lord to Moses in Deut. xvii. 14-20. This would be the basis upon which the administration of the kingdom should be operated in the years to come. There is no doubt that in this respect Samuel was a man of great discernment and intellect: a truly great man. After the election of Saul as king, Samuel dismissed the representatives of the twelve tribes who had been gathered together for this purpose, and they returned to their homes. There is no doubt that he continued to be the guiding power behind the throne thereafter until the time of his death. As for Saul, we read that he also “went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched” (I Sam. x. 26).

Here is an insight into the character of God. Despite the rejection of Him by the people as their King, He nevertheless does not entirely withdraw His mercy and care for them, so a band of men accompanied Saul to his home who had sworn allegiance to him and would serve as a loyal bodyguard through thick and thin. This was because God had “touched their hearts”. He knew that Saul would need much support and encouragement in the days ahead by men prepared to lay down their lives in his service. There is no doubt that God had warmed their hearts to Saul, recognizing him as the king appointed by Jehovah, and thus willing to dedicate their lives to him. The Lord knew full well that Saul would need this support and strengthening in the early days of the establishment of his reign.

If ever a man had need of such loyalty, Saul did right now. His dramatic rise to fame and elevation to the kingship was bound to cause misgivings and jealousy in the hearts of not a few. One can imagine the feelings of some of the princes and rulers of tribes such as Judah and Ephraim, mighty tribes in Israel who had continually taken the lead in matters of national importance. How would they react to a king from the insignificant tribe of Benjamin? If Jehovah Himself had been rejected, how could Saul count on their loyalty to him? Those who considered themselves more fitted for the crown would moreover have their admirers and hangers-on to support them in their claims.

“But the children of Belial said, ‘How shall this man save us?’. And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace” (x. 27).

“Children of Belial” here signifies evil or worthless men (or women) who care nothing for their God. Hannah used the phrase when she had been accused by Eli of drunkenness in the house of Jehovah, “Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial” (I.Sam.i.16). As regards Eli’s sons, they are referred to as “sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord” (ii. 12). It occurs once only in the N.T. where the apostle Paul warns the

Corinthians not to be unequally yoked in fellowship with those who are of Belial and not Christ (II Cor. vi. 14-16).

So we read the children of Belial in I Sam. x. 27 said, "How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents". Had he known it, Saul was in good company for these words were used also of Israel's rightful King, as David wrote in Psa. xxii. 6 "I am a reproach of men, and despised of the people". Isaiah saw also the same vision of the One Who would be "despised and rejected of men" (liii. 3). How well we know these prophecies were fulfilled most completely when the Saviour came to His own people: "He hath a demon, and is mad; why hear ye Him?" (John x. 20).

Saul held his peace, literally "He was as though he had been deaf". He wisely held his tongue when those who were bitterly opposed to him sought to provoke. Perhaps he realized that he must first prove himself to the nation and gain the people's respect before safeguarding himself from his enemies. This prudent conduct showed remarkable self-control on the part of the new king, so initially showing himself worthy to be ruler.

Saul's silence in the teeth of such provocation revealed considerable self control. We are reminded of the words of Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes concerning the holding of one's tongue when it is expedient:

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven ... a time to keep silence and a time to speak" (Eccles. iii. 1-8).

**No.17. xi. 1 - 6.
pp. 159, 160**

In chapter xi. we come to the point where Saul wins his spurs in the eyes of the nation.

"Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee. And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel" (I Sam. xi. 1, 2).

Ammon was the son born to Lot's younger daughter. As Dr. Bullinger says "Begotten in shame, he had a shameful history". His descendants were a constant threat to God's people. When Moses led Israel through the wilderness on their way to the promised land, they were commanded by God not to "distress or meddle with them, for I have given it to the children of Lot for a possession". Was this the very special relationship that Abraham had with God that Lot's descendants should receive this favour? On three occasions Abraham is referred in Scripture as "the friend of God". Who can tell?

Jabesh Gilead was a somewhat remote city on the east side of the river Jordan, although some miles from the Ammonite border. The Ammonites were a warlike people and had a powerful army. When Nahash came up he would have surrounded the city, so that it was completely cut off. The elders had no option but to accept the terms laid down. In order to save the people's lives, and their homes from being ransacked, they declared their willingness to pay tribute. The barbaric threat to "thrust out all their right eye" meant the men of Jabesh would never be able to bear arms again; for in battle it was the practice to cover the left eye by the shield.

"And the elders of Jabesh said unto them, Give us seven days' respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if there be no man to save us, we will come out to thee" (xi. 3).

A request by a beleaguered city or fortress for time or respite was usually accepted. They certainly were far away from any hope of rescue from the tribes on the other side of the Jordan river. It looked as though the city was doomed. Yet messengers got through the enemies' lines, and went straight to Gibeah where Saul's home was.

It is interesting to note that between the tribe of Benjamin and the city of Jabesh Gilead there had long existed the closest ties of friendship. This would have originated well before the terrible punishment of the tribe of Benjamin by the remainder of Israel recorded in Judges xx. The only city from the whole nation that did not send representatives to take part in the judgment meted out on that sad day was the city of Jabesh Gilead (Judg. xxi. 8, 9). Israel were summoned "as one man" by Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, to exact vengeance on the tribe of Benjamin for the crime committed by the men of Gibeah (xx. 11, 28). Jabesh Gilead alone refused to comply with the imperious command. For this act of disobedience the city was razed to the ground and the inhabitants put to the sword. The girls of marriageable age were saved, however, and given to the sorely decimated tribe of Benjamin that their name should not die out in Israel. Jabesh Gilead had been rebuilt and had become once again a great city. Benjamin had produced the first king in Israel. No wonder then that the city in the hour of its sore need and deadly peril should send for help to Gibeah to Saul.

The messengers got through, and the people who heard of the tragic plight of their friends bewailed, and wrung their hands. Saul's anointing had made no difference to his manner of life, for we read that "he came after the herd out of the field". He carried on the duties on the farm and waited for the Lord to indicate His will as to when he was to take on the leadership in Israel. The time had now come. The news of the desperate peril of the people of Jabesh-Gilead, and of the distress of this ancient friend and ally deeply moved Saul. It was then that the Spirit of God came upon him, and he knew what he had to do.

No.18. xi. 6 - 15.
pp. 178 - 180

“And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly” (I Sam. xi. 6).

We often read of this Spirit of God coming upon His servants, preparing their thoughts and enduing them with wisdom, valour, and power from on high. We remember the changed lives of the apostles after Pentecost, and of that other Saul, who became Paul, on the Damascus Road. It was power from on high that enabled faithful men to carry out the will of the Lord.

“And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out with one consent. And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand” (I Sam. xi. 7, 8).

Suddenly Saul assumes command. He takes the necessary action required to order the nation to war. Israel responded as one man, and there assembled at Bezek a great army. This was in the plain of Jezreel in the tribe of Issachar’s territory, where there was plenty of space for the gathering of this huge host. All the tribes must have responded to the summons of the young king by sending every man they could muster, with the exception of the mighty tribe of Judah. Evidently she still smarted that it was not from her sons that the choice of king was made. So a token army only was contributed from this proud people.

“And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-Gilead, Tomorrow, by that time the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed it to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad. Therefore the men of Jabesh said, Tomorrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you” (xi. 9, 10).

Bezek was a mere twenty miles from Jabesh, so by noon deliverance would be at hand. To say the beleaguered city “was glad” seems to be a masterly under-statement. One can imagine the delirious relief and joy of the people as the news seeped through that help was on the way, and that the new king Saul was near at hand with a mighty army.

Saul evidently did not stop for sleep. Dividing his force into three parties he attacked “in the morning watch”. This was the last of the three dividing the twelve hours of darkness into four-hour shifts. The morning watch lasted from 2a.m. until 6a.m., so Saul was better than his promise to the citizens of Jabesh-Gilead. In fact, by the time the sun was hot the Ammonites were defeated, and Saul had gained a triumphant victory. He became at once the ‘darling’ of the nation, a hero acclaimed from Dan to Beersheba.

“And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death” (xi. 12).

The great weight and influence of Samuel among the people is strikingly shown by their turning to him, even in the first flush of Saul's great victory. It was Samuel to whom the people looked to bring to judgment the men who dared to question the wisdom of electing Saul as king.

“And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for today the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel” (xi. 13).

A wise as well as generous decision. Vengeance *then* could well have been the cause of civil war and of future feuds and bitterness. So Saul began his reign with wise discretion as well as heroic valour. He had humbly acknowledged the merciful hand of God in the glorious triumph over the enemy, so it became impossible for him to seek personal revenge on those in Israel who sought his downfall. The mighty power of Jehovah had gained for Israel a glorious victory, and in view of the generous mercy of the Lord upon his rebellious and stiff-necked people, with the spirit of God within his heart he had no other option than to show clemency also.

“Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there. And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the Lord; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly” (xi. 14, 15).

It was at Mizpeh, the site of the decisive battle with the Philistines that finally wrenched the initiative from these mighty foes of Israel, that Saul was elected and anointed king. It was at Gilgal that he formally became king. After his great victory and the deliverance of the beleaguered city of Jabesh-Gilead, his former anointing was ratified and he became in very deed king in Israel.

Gilgal, the place that held the most sacred memories for the people. When Jehovah rolled up the river Jordan to make a pathway for the armies of His people to enter into Canaan, the promised land, one man from each tribe was selected to carry one boulder from the brink of the river bed where the priests that carried the ark of the covenant stood firm. These twelve boulders were pitched in GILGAL for a memorial for ever to the children of Israel. Here their thoughts would be taken back to the power and majesty of Jehovah their God, His mercy and His faithfulness toward them.

Joshua had made Gilgal his capital city as God swept the Canaanites from the land before the hosts of Israel. It was a place of hallowed memory. It was the national shrine. It was of course in the territory given to the tribe of Benjamin. There Samuel and representatives of the whole nation crowned Saul as their king.

No.19. xii. 1 - 25.
pp. 217 - 220

Chapter xi. finishes on a high note for king Saul. He had begun his reign over Israel in splendid style for the Lord was with him.

When Nahash, the mighty king of Ammon, heard that the Israelites had appointed a king, he came and captured the city of Jabesh Gilead.

The Ammonites were descended from Lot and his younger daughter. They were an idolatrous and warlike nation whose kingdom lay to the north-east of Moab, and east of the tribes of Reuben and Gad. It was between the rivers Arnon and Jabbok, to the west of the river Jordan. In Deut. xxiii. 3-6 we read of God's command to His people Israel regarding these Ammonites:

“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever: Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee. Nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee. Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever.”

Jabesh Gilead was a town in the territory allocated to the tribe of Gad, and situated right on the border with the Ammonites. The inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead were forced to enter into a covenant with Nahash, who offered to spare their lives, but would have the right eyes of all the males put out. Fighting men would then be rendered useless by this inhuman act, as in battle the left eye was covered by the shield.

The elders of Jabesh asked for a seven day respite, and immediately sent word to Saul and asked for help.

Saul at once gathered an army together, and Jehovah gave him a magnificent victory, as we read in xi. 13:

“for today the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel.”

What a boost for Saul this was at the very commencement of his reign!

In chapter xi. 14 and 15, Samuel summoned the nation to Gilgal and publicly presented Saul to all the nation, confirming his kingship. Sacrifices were offered to the Lord and a great coronation celebration was held.

In chapter xii. Samuel obtains witness from all the people of his uprightness in his office. No one could accuse him of accepting bribes, defrauding, stealing or abusing

them in any way. It was a very wonderful record of a very distinguished servant of the Lord. He urged the people to remember how God miraculously delivered their forefathers from Egypt, the land of their terrible bondage, and had given them their land, a land that flowed with milk and honey. Yet, just as their fathers had done, this nation of Israel too had turned away from, and forgotten the One Who so graciously blessed them. They had demanded a king when the Lord God was their King. Their grievous sin in turning their backs on Him was to become like the idolatrous nations around them. Yet despite their wickedness God had not consumed them in His wrath, but mercifully forgave them on one condition. Both their king and the people must fear, serve, obey and worship only the Lord their God.

Today there are no strings attached to our salvation. For God has paid the price of sin and death in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has redeemed us from the dominion of sin, and if we accept His gift of forgiveness and by faith put our trust in Him, and believe that He rose from the dead in resurrection power, we too shall have eternal life in unity with Him.

In I Sam. xii. 14, 15, Israel are given a choice:

“If ye will fear the Lord, and serve Him, and obey His voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the Lord your God: But if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers.”

So the king and the people have to make a decision. It is quite clear-cut. Either they can honour and obey the Lord their God, or they can rebel against Him and His commands. In the early part of this chapter Samuel had reminded the people what had happened to their forefathers when they had forsaken the Lord and worshipped the idols of the heathen nations around them. Then in verses 16-18 God even condescends to give them visible evidence of His power:

“Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the Lord, and He shall send thunder and rain; and ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a king. So Samuel called unto the Lord; and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel” (I Sam. xii. 16-18).

In answer to Samuel's prayer He sent the thunder and rain at the time of the wheat harvest. In Prov. xxvi. 1 we read: “As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool”. It was unheard of for rain to fall at the time of wheat harvest and this miracle shocked these people into the realization of the sin they had committed against the Lord in demanding a king apart from Him. They now fear the judgment of God upon them and the punishment that surely will fall upon them. So they beseech Samuel to pray to “the Lord your God” that He will not destroy them in His wrath. They fear that He is no longer their God, and as they had forsaken Him, so He had forsaken them.

What gracious words God gave to Samuel to answer these faithless and stupid children of His! His patience and mercy are almost unbelievable. Read verses 20-25, especially verse 22 which gives us the reason for God's pardon:

"For the sake of His great name the Lord will not reject His people, because the Lord was pleased to make you His own" (N.I.V.).

Surely these words echo down the ages and bring joy and hope to all His children in all dispensations and callings.

In the latter half of this verse the A.V. reads: "because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people", or "a people for Himself". All the Prophets in the O.T. confirm this, as for example in Mal. iii. 16 and 17:

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

The word "jewels" is translated elsewhere in the O.T. Scriptures "peculiar treasure". These words appear seven times in Scripture, and in every case refer to the future blessings God has reserved for His earthly people Israel.

In I Sam. xii. there is only one condition attached to God's blessings at this time, and that was that as a nation they feared the Lord and sought to serve Him in truth with all their heart. If however they forsook Him and continued to do wickedly, then they would be consumed, both the people and the king.

How can we ever fathom God's love and grace towards sinful men and women? The reason behind Israel's desire for a king was that they wanted to be like all the idolatrous nations around them, people who worshipped idols of wood and stone, and which included rites of unbridled lust and outrageous customs.

How true, and up to date, are the words of Prov. xxix. 18 where we read: "Where there is no vision, the people perish". We might add to these words the last verse of the book of Judges:

"... every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Worship. **pp. 230 - 233**

“O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker”
(Psa. xcv. 6).

How often do we read about worship in the O.T., but the references in the N.T. are less frequent, and there is hardly any mention of worship in the Prison Epistles.

The text we quote above is well known and contains an invitation to worship, to bow down and to kneel before our Maker. The reason is given in the following verse “For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand”. Our minds go back to Psa. xxiii., “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want”.

Psalm xcv. begins “O come, let us sing unto the Lord”, and the following verses, leading up to our text, form a basis and the background to our worship. Let us sing, and let us come before His presence (His face) with thanksgiving; because the Lord is a great God. We are reminded that He is the Creator and He formed the dry land, and the sea is His. So in our worship we come into the presence of the great God, and stand, or kneel, before His face. We come rejoicing and with thanksgiving, and we sing unto our Lord.

The most common Hebrew word that is translated “worship” is *shachah* and conveys bowing down. It occurs over 170 times. The first occurrence is in Gen. xxii. 5 and is in the context of sacrifice. Abraham was told to offer up his only son Isaac as a burnt offering. He took two young men with them and when they were in sight of the mountain where the offering was to be made, he told the young men to wait with the donkey, while he and the lad (Isaac) “go yonder and worship”. Thus in this first occurrence there is a link between worship and sacrifice.

Other references containing *shachah* as examples are:

“And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord” (Gen. xxiv. 26).

“And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord” (II Chron. xx. 18).

“And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered ‘Amen, Amen’, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground” (Neh. viii. 6).

In the book of Daniel, the Hebrew word *segad* appears 12 times and is translated “worship”. It means to bow down or do obeisance. The phrase “fall down and worship the golden image” occurs several times, e.g. Dan. iii. 5. A remarkable event is recorded in Dan. ii. 46. Daniel has reminded the king of his dream and has given him the interpretation of it. Then we read:

“Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him.”

We might pause here to reflect on the English word “worship” which conveys adoration, honour, homage, reverence, and veneration. Its use in the old days was not so restricted as it is now. Wycliffe translated John xii. 26 “If any man serve Me, My Father shall worship him”. This sentence now appears in the A.V. “If any man serve Me ... him will My Father honour”.

In Luke xiv. 10 we read in the A.V. “Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee”. The word is derived from the Anglo-Saxon with the sense of “worth” or “worthy”. Worship might be rendered “worthy-ship” or an acknowledgment of worth. We see this connection as we read Revelation v. 12:

“Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing”,

and in verse 14:

“And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever.”

So, in worshipping God, we ascribe to Him greatness as Creator; power, glory and majesty, etc.

We have mentioned *shachah*, but another Hebrew word also occurs many times. It is *abad* which, although sometimes translated worship, is more often given the sense of “to serve”. If we made a detailed study of the use of these two words, we would encounter the problem of the association of these words. If we refer to *An Alphabetical Analysis* (part 5, pp. 416-435; pt.7-pp.376-392; pt.10-pp.367-374), we find that Charles Welch has studied the problem in depth. We quote from page 382 of Part 7:

“We will not, therefore, be dogmatic, but so far as we have investigated, it would seem that there is not a single passage in the O.T. where ‘serve’ and ‘worship’ come together when the context is concerned with *the worship of God!* On the other hand, there are nineteen references where the two words come together in connection with the worship of other gods.”

Space does not permit us to study the implications of these facts but we content ourselves with a quotation from page 383:

“...in the observing of the feasts of the Lord, and the sabbaths, it is reiterated that ‘ye shall do no *servile* work therein. ‘Servility’ and ‘worship’ cannot be thought of together...”.

When we turn to the N.T., we find that the Greek word most frequently used is *proskuneo* and it occurs 60 times. Young's Concordance gives the meaning "to kiss the hand—to worship". C. H. Welch gives "to kiss the hand (towards) one, in token of reverence". In the O.T. examples may be found which associate kissing with worship. It is helpful to analyze the way this word is used in the N.T.:

In the Gospels: Matthew (13x), Mark (twice), Luke (3x), John (11x)	=	29
In the Acts Period: Acts (4x), I Corinthians (once), Hebrews (twice)	=	7
In the book of the Revelation		24
In the Prison Epistles		0

Total		60
		====

The One Who receives worship in the O.T. is the Lord, sometimes referred to as "The Lord Thy God". In the N.T. (The Revelation) worship is offered to "God", or to "Him that made heaven and earth". But in John, when our Lord spoke to the woman at the well, He says that the "Father" seeks worship.

It is in John iv. that we have at last some instruction about worship. We need to read carefully verses 20-24. The Samaritan woman queries whether worship should be offered "in the mountain" or in Jerusalem. Christ replied that the time was coming when the place and ceremonial worship would no longer be important. God is Spirit and we should worship Him in spirit and in truth. The Father was seeking such to worship Him.

But when we come to the Prison Epistles, we cannot find the Greek word *proskuneo*. We do find however, the word "worship" in Phil. iii. 3:

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

The Greek word for worship here is *latreuo* and it occurs 21 times, being translated worship 4 times but "to serve" 17 times. The word therefore could be translated "serve" to agree with many other passages. Phil. i. 1 describes Paul as the servant of God. Philippians ii. 17 refers to the "sacrifice and service of your faith". We continue to worship God the Father, Who is worthy, but we no longer worship with outward show. Our true worship is in spirit, and we commune with our Father in heart and mind. So let us seek to do the Father's will and to serve Him faithfully.

Practical Truth in Ephesians (6)

“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (holiness and truth)” (Eph. 4:24).

The next section is described in the structure given by Charles Welch as “the New Man”, as follows:

Doctrinal	D	2:11-19	The New Man Once alienated from the commonwealth
Practical	D	4:20-32	The New Man Once alienated from the life of God (see vs. 18)

The new man is a new creation. Let us remind ourselves of the four occurrences of the Greek word *ktizo*, create:

- 2:10 Created in Christ Jesus unto good works.
- 2:15 To make (create) in Himself of twain one new man
- 3:9 God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ.
- 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (holiness in truth).

The fact that the new man is a new creation is thus mentioned in both doctrinal and practical sections.

Paul, when writing to the Corinthians, said:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (creation); old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

When we read of what God has created, we are not reading about a gradual transition from one state to another. The old is passed away. All things become new. It is not evolution. It is creation.

Before proceeding further, let us take a bird’s eye view of chapter 2 of Ephesians.

Ephesians chapter 2

Spiritual death	a 1-3 b 4	Once. Walk. Word and flesh But God. Mercy. Love
Spiritual Life	c 5-10	Made alive together Raised together Made to sit together
Gentiles Distant (in the flesh)	a 11, 12	Once. Gentile. In flesh. In world

Made nigh (in
Christ Jesus)

b 13-18
c 19-22

But now. Nigh. One
Citizens together
Fitly framed together
Builded together.

The first part of the chapter reminds us that in times past we were children of disobedience, children of wrath, but we learn the thanksgiving of God's grace (by grace we are saved), and the "exceeding riches" of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.

When we pass on to the following section, there is a dispensational aspect, for whereas we had been reading about Spiritual Death and Life, we are confronted with our distance from God because we are Gentiles in the flesh. The good news is that we are made nigh by the blood of Christ. We have been reconciled to God in One body by the cross. Whereas there were two: those who were far off (i.e. Gentiles), and those who were nigh (Israel), now there is a new company called "the both" or "the twain", which is a new man. We, as Gentiles, were distant from God, now we are made nigh. As Gentiles (uncircumcised) we were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, without hope, without God in the world.

But the blood of Christ Jesus has made all the difference. Christ Jesus our peace, and He has made "the both" one. The middle wall of partition has been broken down and the enmity has been abolished in His flesh; no longer is there division due to commandments and ordinances. We now have access by One Spirit to the Father.

Limitations of space prevent us from making a fuller expression of this theme and explaining in detail the meaning of the term "the middle wall of partition". This can be found in *The Testimony of the Lord's Prisoner* by Charles Welch, and *Letters From Prison* by Stuart Allen.

Let us now examine the practical implications of the New Man. This section commences with verse 20, which we quote:

"But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus" (Eph. 4:20, 21)

Firstly we note that verse 20 refers back to the previous verses, which are of a negative character. The apostle Paul had been writing of the dreadful state of the Gentiles, who walked in the vanity of their mind, with their understanding darkened, and alienated from the life of God: ignorant, because of the blindness of their hearts. He goes on to speak of unspeakable uncleanness. It reminds us of Romans 1:18-25 where we read that "their foolish heart was darkened" (vs. 21) and "who changed the truth of God unto a lie" (vs. 25)

As we read this section therefore (Eph. 4:20-32) we shall not be surprised that there is a great emphasis on truth, and putting away lying (vs. 25). Charles Welch translates this "putting away the lie" which has a deeper meaning.

Before we pass on, let us have another look at verses 20 and 21: first, verse 20 “But ye have not so learned Christ”. We might have thought that this is important to learn the truth, and indeed so it is: there are those things which we quite rightly wish to learn. But Paul concentrates on the essential fact that we need to “learn Christ”. He is the Truth, and He is the Great Teacher. We need to know Him (as Paul wrote in Philippians 3:10) and be taught by Him. There is a phrase in verse 21 that may surprise us, for it reads, “...and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus”. This is often misquoted as “the truth as it is in Jesus”, but the actual words are “as the truth is in Jesus”. The apostle Paul usually gives Christ His exalted name; Christ Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ, or the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. But here he uses the name by which He was known while on earth. It brings to mind Philippians 2:5-11 where we read that He humbled Himself, became a man, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He defeated sin and Satan and overcame death. If we learn Christ we need to bear in mind all that He did when He came down to this earth. We are asked to put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts (vs. 22).

Jesus Christ was both man and God, and it is as man that His example is set before us. The old man in us cannot evolve into a perfect man. By faith, we must reckon the old man, the flesh, to be dead. We died with Christ, Paul writes to Romans:

“Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4)

We read in verse 6 of the same chapter:

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin”.

To read “put off...the old man” is easy, but to put it into practice is a very different matter. Charles Welch says “No believer is told to put off the old man in an absolute manner”. This is undertaking beyond the power of any living soul and nothing but the power of the cross of Christ can effectuate it. He goes on to quote Romans 6:6, which we have quoted above. He then comments further and we quote from page 149 of his book *The Testimony of the Lord's Prisoner*:

“Three most important divisions of truth are presented in this verse (Rom. 6:6), and failure to apportion its teaching correctly has led some children of God to the brink of despair. The first statement refers to a work entirely outside ourselves: “Our old man was crucified with Him”. The verb is passive – indicating something in which we ourselves had not part; it is aorist, an indefinite tense, in this case referring to the past, by reason of the added words, “with Him. No is ever told to crucify the old man; this was the work of the Son of God alone, and is finished. The second statement arises out of the first: “that the body of sin might be rendered inoperative”. The body of sin being no longer dominant, the third statement follows: “that henceforth we may no longer be enslaved to sin”. The “henceforth” of Romans 6:6 finds its parallel in Ephesians 4:17: “that we henceforth walk walk not as other Gentiles walk”.

Verse 22 of Ephesians 4, which speaks of putting off the old man, is followed by “and be renewed in the spirit of your mind” in verse 23. Then we are urged to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness in truth. So in both getting rid of the old man and putting on the new man, we have the work of God. He renews the spirit of the mind and the new man is His creation. Charles Welch translated the latter part of verse 24 as:

“...the new man which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of THE truth”

and in verse 25;

“wherefore putting away THE LIE”.

He also reminds us of Romans 1:25 where we read that they,

“...changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator “, (or as C.H.W. translates it “changed the truth of God for THE LIFE”)

So in our practical life we are caught up in the battle that goes on between truth and error, between The Truth and The Lie. Satan is a “liar” and “the father of it” (John. 8:44). He is the great deceiver, and we must be on our guard lest we say the half truth, for our evidence must be “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth”. We should speak “every man truth with his neighbor” for we are members one of another. No corrupt communication should proceed out of the mouth but our words should edify and ministry grace to those who hear. All evil speaking should be put away. What a high standard is set before us! It is not easy to let the unkind word or unacceptable remark pass our lips? The apostle James was aware of this problem when he wrote of the tongue being a little member, but it boasts great things: “Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” (James 3:5)

We come now to Ephesians 4:26, which is sometimes quoted as justification for “righteous anger” or “righteous indignation”. One suggestion is that this could be read as a question. Can we be angry and sin not? If we are angry, Paul says that the cause of the indignation should be settled before the sun sets. We should remember that in verse 31 Paul writes that all bitterness, wrath, and anger...should be put away. We should be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God as forgiven us for Christ’s sake. If we are tenderhearted there is little room for righteous indignation.

So we come to the end of this part of the practical section. Let us meditate on the words “but ye have not so learned Christ”. May we remember what Christ has taught us, all that He has done for us, and the truth as it is in Jesus. Christ told Pilate that one reason why He came into the world was to bear witness unto the truth, and added “Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice” (John 18:37)

May we be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and may we have grace so we do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God (Eph. 4:30). G.T. Foster

Practical Truth in Ephesians (7)

“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ”
(Eph. 4:7)

We now have to consider the Temple and the Body, which appear under reference ‘E’ in the structure:

Doctrinal Section:	E 2:119-22	The Temple fitly framed together Apostles and Prophets Foundation Ministry
Practical Section:	E 4:7-19	The Body fitly joined together Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists Pastors and Teachers Adjusting Ministry

Throughout Ephesians there are groups of three, and these are set out for the whole epistle on page 13 of *In Heavenly Places*. It may be helpful if we set out the two groups in Section ‘E’:

<i>The Threefold Union</i>	<i>The Threefold Measure</i>
Citizens together	The Gift of Christ
Framed together	The fullness of Christ
Builted together	The measure of every part

As we begin to read Ephesians 2:19-22, we find that we must refer to the earlier part of the chapter, because of the word “therefore”: “Now therefore we are not longer strangers and foreigners”. We remember that in verse 12 it is recorded that we were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise. This has changed and peace has been made; the both have been reconciled unto God in one body by the cross. We have access by one Spirit to the Father (verse 18). So now we are fellow citizens and we are linked with the “household” of God.

Charles Welch gives a structure of Ephesians 2:11-22 on page 92 of *The Testimony of the Lord’s Prisoner* which is helpful:

Ephesians 2:11-22

A Once – Strangers and Aliens	\	
B Now – Made night		Body
C Unity – The two made one		
D Access – In One Spirit	/	
A No longer – Strangers and aliens	\	
B But – Fellow – Citizens		Temple
C Unity – Fitly framed together		
D Habitation – In Spirit	/	

The expression “fellow-citizens with the saints” in verse 19 does not at first present a problem until we realize that the Greek reads “fellow-citizens *of* the saints”. In translating there is another problem because the Greek can be translated ‘holy persons’, or ‘saints’, or ‘holy places’. In Hebrews 9:8 the Greek is translated “the holiest of all” and in 10:19 “the holiest”. In *The Testimony of the Lords Prisoner*, page 94, Charles Welch lists the passages that are affected by this new translation, and we quote them:

- “What the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the holiest of all” (Eph.1:18)
- “Fellow-citizens in the holiest of all” (Eph. 2:19)
- “For the re-adjusting of the holiest of all” (Eph. 4:12)
- “Made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the holiest of all” (Col. 1:12)

We also have in Ephesians 2:19 the expression “household of God”, and this leads us to think of a house, or home. Six Greek words are used in verses 19-22 which include the word ‘house’ which in Greek is *oikos*. As there is so much emphasis on this in the original Greek we list them below:

- 2:19 Foreigner *paroikos*.....Alongside the house
- 2:19 Household *oikeios*.....The family side of the house
- 2:20 Built *epoikodomeo*.....To build as on a foundation
- 2:21 Built Together
sunoikodomeomai.....To build together as a house
- 2:22 Habitation *katoiketerion*..A certain or durable dwelling

God has always desired to dwell with His people: this can be a lengthy study. This subject is covered by Stuart Allen and Charles Welch in their respective books. We are built into a building, fitly framed together, which grows to form a holy Temple in the Lord, and this is to be a habitation, or dwelling place, of God through the Spirit.

The Greek word for ‘temple in Ephesians 2:21 is not *hieron* which should indicate a temple as a whole, but *naos*, which means the innermost shrine, the holy of holies, and this is in line with what we have discovered about the translation of the Greek word *epouraniois* which can mean holy persons or holy places. We should bear this in mind in Ephesians 2:6 where we read “and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”; and also in Colossians 3:1-4 where in verse 1 we read that we should “seek those things which are above where Christ setteth on the right hand of God”.

The reference to apostles and prophets in 2:20 should not be confused with the 12 apostles. It may help if we quote from *Letters from Prison*, page 54:

- “The ministry given through the new order of apostles and prophets of which Paul was chief, was a foundation ministry serving the people of God until the New Testament, the written Word of God was completed. This ministry rested upon the one foundation, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11) for other foundation can no man lay. He is the chief corner stone upon Whom the whole Temple building rests, and in fact the whole purpose of God embracing heaven and earth. Consequently Peter also speaks of the Lord with the same title (1 Pet. 2:6,7)”. (See also *In Heavenly Places*, pp. 255, 256).

The practical section begins with Ephesians 4:7 “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ”. We are at once faced with a very personal responsibility to serve the Lord in the sphere in which He has placed us, using the ability and talent He has given us, and doing that task for which He has equipped us. He would not expect anyone to do that for which he (or she) is not fitted. We are members of the Church which is His Body, and just as our own bodies have parts with different functions, so in His body there are many members with different tasks. One has the gift of ministry, another can play the organ, another is suited to be treasurer, another has the ability to write letters which are helpful to others, and in the conduct of work in which we are all engaged.

It would be useless for one with no knowledge of music to attempt to play the organ, or for one who is hopeless with figures to offer his services as treasurer. Similarly, one who is appointed minister or teacher must have the gift and necessary knowledge. He must be “apt to teach”. So it is vital that we ask the Lord to show us how He desires we should serve Him. There are ways of serving the Lord that do not bring us into the limelight, but such work may be essential and important. So much vital work is done quietly and without outward show. Prayer support is like a power house, and those who hold up the work in prayer and intercession support the witness in the privacy of their own homes.

It is noticeable that once we have been shown our particular function, we have the grace given to us so that we may serve the Lord acceptably. But it is also according to “the measure of the gift of Christ”. We are like vessels of different shapes and sizes, so we should ask the Lord to fill our vessel, whether large or small and whatever its shape. We may have a large, or a small measure of the gift of Christ. If we have a large measure, then like the man in the parable who had five talents (Matt. 25:15) we have a greater responsibility, and the Lord will expect more than from one who has a smaller measure.

Before we leave this subject, let us observe the three references to “measure”:

- 4:7 The measure of the gift of Christ
- 4:13 The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ
- 4:16 The measure of every part

We have concentrated so far on the gifts made to each one of us, but we must notice that in verse 11 we read, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers”. Paul was appointed to be “a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles”. He was a gift from God. He was specially chosen and fitted for the important office which he carried out so faithfully. We have already commented on the foundation ministry undertaken by the apostle Paul, and as he completed that work there is no need in these days for apostles. We do need however evangelists, pastors and teachers. Indeed, what a great need there is today for sound teachers! In many parts of the world (and even in our own country) there is much work awaiting the evangelist. For every sphere of service to God gives men, his gift to us, so that His work may continue. Each of these servants asks God to fill his measure.

In verses 12 and 13 we read that Christ gave the apostles, prophets, etc. for the “perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ”. The word ‘perfecting’ means adjusting, mending, or equipping. After the setting aside of Israel there was a need for adjustment as the revelation of the Mystery was made known. The “work of the ministry” does not mean a service restricted to preaching and teaching. Ministry means serving, and therefore has a wider meaning which includes all the various ways of serving the Lord. So every member of the Body of Christ is included in the “work of the ministry”, and each member should do his or her part in the building up and edification of the Body of Christ. This work goes on with the objective in verse 13:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”

Stuart Allen has pointed out that sometimes “faith” is used as the equivalent of a body of truth (e.g. 2 Tim. 4:7), and this verse indicates what constitutes the “good deposit”. Knowledge here means full knowledge resulting from acknowledging all the claims that the Lord Jesus Christ has upon us. It is only by living with Him, and endeavoring to do His will that we grow in grace and in our knowledge of Him. Growth is indicated in the closing words of verse 13. The word stature may mean age as well as height, and represents full growth. What a tremendous statement it is, that we should reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ! Can we ever fathom the meaning of these words?

Let us pause to consider the references to fullness:

- 1:23.....His Body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.
- 3:19.....And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God
- 4:12, 13.....for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, and unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

We now come to some negative statements in verse 14:

“That we be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error” (Eph. 4:14 R.V.)

These strong words are directed to those who do not grow up spiritually. As spiritual infants they are a target for Satan, and the system which is called “the Lie”. If a person does not mature he is unstable, and easily attracted to the latest new idea. He is like the people of Athens who “spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear, some new thing” (Acts 17:21). Stuart Allen comments in *Letters From Prison*, page 90:

“These ‘winds of doctrine’ do not blow by chance. They are directed by the father of lies and so attractively presented by his dupes that the spiritual baby clutches at them readily and is completely deceived”.

There are many warnings and helpful remarks by Stuart Allen also on pages 89 to 91, but space does not permit us to quote them here. Let us pass on, then, to verse 15:

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him, which is the Head, even Christ” (R.V.)

We are again faced with the truth (as opposed to the “lie”), and the importance of growing up. The words “speaking the truth” are literally “holding the truth in love”. The sense is (as Stuart Allen states) “rather living and acting the truth that the Apostle has in mind. It is the antidote to the spiritual duplicity of the previous verse”. We should be in union with the Head, so that we grow up into Him, becoming a mature Christian. But verse 16 follows verse 15 without a full stop:

“From Whom all the Body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the Body unto the building up of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16 R.V.)

The Body is “fitly framed and knit together”. The Greek is the same as in Ephesians 2:21, which related to the holy temple, a habitation of God through the Spirit. In our bodies, if we are healthy, all the members fit together, are joined together, and work together. We are not conscious of all the members, unless one member is sick. Then, the member fails to work together as it should and there is pain, or the bodily function is impaired. The Body spiritual is similar. If we work together in harmony we are not conscious of each other, but if one member fails to work in unison there is irritation, trouble, or ill will. In Colossians 2:19 we read of “joints and bands”, or joints and ligaments. These enable the body to be joined together as one body. Colossians 2:2 says “being knit together in love”.

The joints themselves are not the origin of the supplies. The reason why we have the supply is because the Lord does the supplying. The joints act as channels through which the supply comes.

“Every joint supplieth” may be translated “through every joint of supply”. The body functions “according to the effectual working in the measure of every part”, and this effectual working is made possible by the life-giving energy, the resurrection power of God.

The climax comes in the last phrase “maketh increase of the Body unto the edifying of itself in love”. The final result must be the growth of the Body, the building up of the Body, and in this growth every member must share and do its part.

So however small and insignificant we may feel ourselves to be, we each in our measure have a part assigned to us by God. We are given grace, according to the gift of Christ. Each one has been appointed to his or her personal task. It is indeed an honour to be thus employed by God to fulfill His purpose. May we be filled with all the fullness of God.

G.T. FOSTER

Practical Truth in Ephesians (8)

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Eph. 4:1)

The apostle Paul is described in Ephesians 3:1 as “the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles” and in Ephesians 4:1 as “the prisoner of the Lord”. So, in C.H. Welch’s structure we have:

Doctrinal Section F 3:1-13 The prisoner of Jesus Christ
Three-fold unity (vs. 6)

Practical Section F 4:1-6 The prisoner of the Lord
Seven-fold unity (vs. 3-6)

No doubt most of us have read Ephesians so often that there is a danger that the import of some of the words may escape us. To read it in another translation might restore some of its freshness, so we will quote the first part of the Doctrinal section in the rendering by Moffatt:

“For this reason I Paul, I whom Christ Jesus has made a prisoner for the sake of you Gentiles – for surely you have heard how the grace of God which was vouchsafed me in your interests has ordered it, how the divine secret was disclosed to me by a revelation
(if you read what I have already written briefly about this, you can understand my insight into that secret was not disclosed to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to His sacred apostles and prophets by the Spirit),
namely, that in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are co-heirs, companions, and co-partners in the Promise. Such is the gospel which I was called to serve by the endowment of God’s grace which was vouchsafed me, by the energy of His power...”

The words “For this reason” occur in verses 1 and 14, and in verses 2 to 13 we have a parenthesis, which contains an explanation why he was called “the prisoner of Jesus Christ (R.V. Christ Jesus) for you Gentiles”.

In the Authorised Version verse 2 begins “If ye have heard which may imply some measure of doubt. Moffatt translates it “Surely you have heard”, and other renderings are “If so be that” or “Seeing that doubtless”. Thus, there is no question of doubt but rather that they are being reminded of something they had already heard.

We may be puzzled by the statement in verse 3 “as I wrote before in a few words”, for we have no record of other writings by Paul to link with this statement. But it is probable that the “few words” are a reference to what he had written earlier in the Epistle to the Ephesians. If we look at chapters 1 and 2 we find at least seven phrases which tell us of God’s wonderful grace and blessing, and these are revelations which were not known in his earlier writings.

Here are the seven phrases taken from chapters 1 and 2:

1:3 all spiritual blessings
1:3 in heavenly places
1:4 chosen in Him before the foundation (overthrow)of the word
2:6 made us sit together in heavenly places
2:15 to make of the twain one new man
2:19 no longer foreigners
2:22 a habitation of God

We might add two references to the headship of Christ:

1:10 He might gather together in one all things in Christ
1:20-23 Gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church

There are two mysteries (secrets) mentioned in chapter 3, and the brackets in the text of the Authorised Version appear in a different position in Moffatt's translation, whereas in the Revised Version the brackets are omitted. Moffatt therefore reads "how the divine secret was disclosed to me by a revelation...namely, that in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are co-heirs..." The interviewing verses are thus related to the mystery of Christ, which was not disclosed to the sons of men in other generations *as it has now been revealed*.

The Mystery (sometimes referred to as "the great secret" to distinguish it from other secrets) concerns our position as members of the Church which is His Body. When we think of our own bodies, some members are more important than others, but in the Body of Christ, all members are regarded as equal. The prefix *sun* is compounded with three Greek words in verse 6, which the Revised Version translates:

fellow heirs
fellow-members of the Body
fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel

It is difficult to make a good English translation to reflect the meaning of the prefix *sun*. One suggestion is to use the word "joint", and so we have joint-heirs, a joint-body, and joint-partakers.

Paul always felt unworthy of the great honour of making know the Secret, for he had persecuted the church during the early part of the "Acts" period. What a tremendous message it is! The Secret concerns wonderful blessing in heaven's holiest of all. But Paul acknowledged that he received the gift of the grace of God, by the effectual working of His power. His task was to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable (untraceable riches of Christ. But what a great responsibility – to make all men see what is the fellowship (dispensation R.V.) of the Mystery (Secret) which from the beginning of the world (R.V. "which from all ages") hath been hid in God...

The amazing fact disclosed in verse 10 is that the principalities and powers in heavenly places are observing the church and learning "the manifold wisdom of God", according to the eternal purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The section closes with another of our wonderful blessings, for in Christ “we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him”. Wherefore, says Paul, I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Having briefly surveyed the doctrinal section, let us examine the practical section which only occupies six verses. Ephesians 4:1-6 begins with the title “the prisoner of the Lord”. On page 329 of *In Heavenly Places* Charles Welch refers to the sixteen occurrences of the title “Lord” standing alone in the epistle, and demonstrates that:

“In Christ” expresses our doctrinal position - our standing.
“In the Lord” indicates our practical relationship - our state.

Paul exhorts us to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. The Greek for “worthy” is suggestive of a pair of balances and implies that our walk should balance our calling. When we consider the tremendous blessings which are described in the doctrinal section, we are conscious of the heavy responsibility that falls on us and we may doubt our ability walk worthy of our calling. But we recognize that we can only live acceptably by the grace of God and in the strength that He gives us. We remember Paul says in Ephesians 6:10 “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might”.

The worthy walk is expressed in three ways:

Eph. 4:1 walk worthy of the vocation
Phil. 1:27 as becometh the gospel of Christ
Col. 1:10 walk worthy of the Lord

The essential attitude of mind is expressed by Paul in the words, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, and love. He follows this by urging us to endeavor to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”. To walk worthy of our vocations is not easy, but is it not just as difficult to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the divisions that had taken place. Some followed Paul, some Apollos, others Cephas, and some said “I am of Christ”. We have to be faithful to the truth this may cause us to face difficulty in maintaining a spirit of unity. The hymn writer expresses it:

Believe not those who say
The upward path is smooth,
Lest thou shouldest stumble in the way
and faint before the truth.

Did Paul himself find it hard to maintain unity? Read Acts 15:36-41. Paul did not think that Mark was suitable to join with him in ministry, but Barnabas took a different view. We read “the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder on from the other”.

We note Paul wrote “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit”, and probably he was acknowledging that our “endeavors” may not always be successful. Yet we are all members of the Church which is His Body and we are fitly joined together. If there is a

lowly spirit, if we forbear in love, we should not be divided one from the other, even if differences of opinion arise.

Paul now sets out the sevenfold unity in verses 4-6, and we give the structure:

- A One Body
- B One Spirit
- C One Hope of the calling
- D ONE LORD
- C One Faith
- B One Baptism
- A One God and Father

If we are to walk worthily and in the unity of the Spirit, there must be a basis on which we unite. If we disagree on a vital issue, how can we be united? The prophet Amos said “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (3:3). In the list of seven we have our foundation of the unity which should hold us together. We can only deal briefly with the seven owing to the demands of space.

ONE LORD. The central feature in One Lord. Without our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we would have no salvation. Without the risen and ascended Lord, how can we be risen with Him? And seated with Him? Not until we realize that Christ is the Head, can we see our position as members of the One Body. If we did not know Christ as the risen Son of God, how would we know the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? All our hope rests on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the centre, or better still we may say “all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things and by Him all things consist” (Col. 1:16,17)

ONE BODY. The church of the One Body is a new creation and Christ as its Head; its hope is to be manifested with Him in glory, far above all. The Mystery which reveals the distinctive standing of the One Body, a joint body, is vital. It is a doctrine which we must hold, and truth that we must guard.

ONE SPIRIT. Let us remind ourselves of the references to the Spirit in Ephesians:

“For through Him, we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:18)

“...ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession” (Eph. 1:13,14)

“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30)

ONE HOPE. Our One Hope is bound up with our calling as is obvious from the way is introduced in verse 4, “There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling”. In chapter 2, Paul says we were raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. In

Colossians 3:4 we read, “When Christ, Who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory”.

ONE FAITH. The One Faith reflects the One Hope of our calling. Stuart Allen suggests that faith and truth go together and faith and truth are like two sides of the same coin. The One Faith is the “good deposit” of truth which was passed to Paul by the risen Christ, and Timothy was exhorted to guard it. In Ephesians 4:13, we read of the need to build up or edify the Body of Christ “till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God”.

ONE BAPTISM. For a full exposition we refer our readers to the book entitled *Letters from Prison* by Stuart Allen. In the structure, One Baptism is balanced by One Spirit. In olden days, water baptism, or washing, was the rule. During the Acts period, water and Spirit baptism are in evidence. The One Baptism must refer then to the baptism by the Holy Spirit Who has sealed us unto the day of redemption.

ONE GOD AND FATHER. We have a problem here for Ephesians 4:6 reads “One God and Father of all, Who is over all, and through all, and in all” (R.V.) If “all” is equivalent to “universal” we approach the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God. But in John 1:12 we find “But as many received Him (Christ), to them gave He the right to become the children of God” (R.V.).

The word “all” must be interpreted according to the context and it may be limited thereby. In our text, as the context concerns the members of the Body, “all” must be interpreted to related to the members of the Body.

To include this article, we will quote from *Letters from Prison*, page 84:

“Here then we have the first stage of a walk that is worthy of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, namely seven perfect parts of a perfect unity made by the Spirit of God, which we are charged to keep and guard, where Christ is pre-eminent, the Father is all in all and the Spirit gives the substance and reality of spiritual riches that are beyond the full comprehension of the human mind”.

G.T. FOSTER

Practical Truth in Ephesians (9)

“That ye may be filled unto all fullness of God (Eph. 3:19 R.V.)

A brief reference to the central prayer in Ephesians was made in the fourth article, but as this prayer is of such great importance, let us meditate upon it in our closing article on Practical Truth in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

In the structure given by Charles Welch, this prayer appears under item G, this:

G. Eph. 3:14-21 The Central Prayer
 The love of Christ
 The fullness of God

Verse 14 begins with the words “For this cause”, with which Paul began in verse 1, but he had to pause in order to give the reason why he was “the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles”, and to enlarge upon “the dispensation of that grace of God which was given to you-ward (R.V.). So the introduction “For this cause” takes us back to chapter 2 where Paul speaks of a building, growing into a holy temple of the Lord, which will be a habitation of God in the Spirit. The picture in chapter 2 is of the whole church being built up, to become a temple, but when we come to chapter 3, we notice that it is the individual believer who is the object of prayer; for in verse 17 Paul prays that “Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith”.

Before Paul utters the prayer in verse 17 he prays that the Ephesians may be strengthened, and a moment’s reflection will enable us to realize that, if Christ is to dwell in our hearts through faith, then our hearts need to be prepared to receive such a visitor. In our daily lives, if we expect an important visitor, what great preparations do we make! Surely if we are to entertain the Lord Himself, suitable preparations are essential. Paul says, you will need power, through the Spirit, and later he says, we need to be strong if we are to apprehend (or comprehend) the four dimensions of the love of Christ. In this prayer, we are facing the fact that we need to have practical experience of fellowship with Christ in anticipation of the time when we shall be seated with Him at God’s right hand. Is it not true that life on this earth is to prepare us for the life we shall enjoy hereafter?

The prayer is divided into three sections by the Greek word *hina*, which means “in order that”. Charles Welch’s structure brings this to our attention:

V Prayer	i. v.14	Prayer to the Father	
	j. v.15	Every family in heaven and earth	
W Threefold	k v.16	In order that	\ According to the riches
petition	l. vv. 16, 17	He may grant	\ of glory. Strengthened
and			with might
threefold	k v.18	In order that	
endowment.	l. v. 18	You may comprehend	/ To have strength enough
	k v.19	In order that	\ Able to do according to
	l vv. 19, 20	You may be filled	power that worketh in us
			/

V Doxology	i v.21	Glory to Him
	j v.21	All the generations of the ages of the ages.

“For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father, from Whom every family in heaven and on earth is name” (Eph. 3:14, 15 R.V.).

We notice that the R.V. differs from the A.V. for the words in verse 14 “of our Lord Jesus Christ” do not appear in the Revised Version as they do not appear in various texts. Also in verse 15, instead of “the whole family”, the Revised Version reads “every family”, which is the literal translation.

“That (in order that) He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *to the end*...(Eph. 3:16, 17 (a) R.V.)

If reference is made to the Englishman’s Greek New Testament, it will be seen that *hina* (to the end) belongs to verse 18. In both the A.V. and the R.V. the last part of verse 17 needs to be linked with verse 18. So we will continue verse 17 and follow through:

“...to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge” (Eph. 3:17 (b), 18, 19(a).

In Ephesians 1:19 Paul prays that the Ephesians may know what is the exceeding greatness of His power, according to the working of the strength of His might, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. Now, in this central prayer, it is this mighty power that is envisaged, “that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward ma”. This shows the extent to which we need to be strengthened if Christ is to dwell in our hearts through faith.

Although this experience would seem to be the highest pinnacle to which we might aspire, when we examine the next verses and read about the love of Christ, we find that words can hardly express the greatness of that love. It is a love of four dimensions, and a love which “passeth knowledge” or it is the “surpassing knowledge”.

We are to “apprehend” the breadth, length, depth, and height, and to “know” the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

Also, in verse 19, there is a particle *te* which may be introduced in translation thus:

“to know even that which surpasses knowledge”

Charles Welch discusses the “spiritual fourth dimension” in some detail in the testimony of the Lord’s Prisoner, pages 101 and 102,* but we extract the headings to indicate the line of thought:

First Sphere	The earth	Two dimensions
Second Sphere	The New Jerusalem	Three dimensions
Third Sphere	The Heavenly Places	Four dimensions

We are “rooted and grounded” in love. At first sight these two figures seem to be strangely mixed. Rooted relates to a plan while grounded and founded relate to a building. If we refer to chapter 2, we find that the holy temple is being built up and the saints are built upon a foundation, Christ Jesus being the chief corner stone. The stones are alive, they are living stones similar to what Peter describes in a parallel passage in 1 Peter 2:5. So the two figures are quite suitable.

“...that (in order that) ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:19 (b) R.V.).

The Authorised Version reads “that ye may be filled with all the fullness of God”. It seems to be impossible that we should be capable of being filled with “all the fullness of God” and the Revised Version is a literal and correct translation. We have seen in previous studies that grace is given according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Eph.4:7), and the growth of the Body is “according to the effectual working in the measure of every part”. The capacity of each member differs; we are all like vessels of various shapes and sizes. So we are filled with the fullness of God according to the measure he has seen fit to give u. Stuart Allen has well expressed it by writing that we can be filled “to the brim”.

“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen (Eph. 3:20, 21 R.V.)

As we come to the wonderful doxology, may we pause, and go back to review again the threefold petition, which is linked so emphatically and increasingly with strength and power. The prayer leads us to such spiritual heights that we cannot contemplate them without the help of the Spirit of God, and we cannot experience those blessings unless resurrection power is granted us.

We have already commented that in verses 16 and 17, Paul prays that the Father would grant, according to the riches of His glory, that they may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man, and this strengthening is the essential preparation for the dwelling of Christ in our hearts. Then, as Paul proceeds in the prayer that they may apprehend the extent, and to know, the love of Christ, he prays that they may be strong. In C.H.Welch’s structure he uses a different translation, “may have strength enough”. The literal translation is “they ye may be fully able to comprehend”. It appears that to know how great and extensive is the love of Christ, we need extra strength.

Then we have the prayer that we may be filled unto all fullness of God, and immediately afterwards, in the doxology, we find the expression “according to the power that worketh in us”. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. What more could be said! How great is His power and how great is the power that is working in us! We certainly need that power if we are to be filled unto all the fullness of God. Let us join with Paul and ascribe to Him the glory: “To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen” (3:21).

For the benefit of those readers who do not possess *Hymns of Praise*, we would like to share hymn No.16, which was written by “A Friend” on Ephesians 3:19:

Filled with all the fullness, can it be
For Gentile strangers such as we?
We who the paths of sin have trod,
As aliens from the life of God.

Yes, 'tis for us, for Christ has died,
Now quickened, risen, glorified;
Seated with Him at God's right hand:
Complete in Him, by faith we stand

May the same mighty power to save,
That brought our Saviour from the grave,
Strength to our inward man impart,
That Christ my dwell within our heart.

Then will all saints in every land
We'll in some measure understand
The love of Christ, that shoreless sea
That saves and keeps eternally.

Final note.

In these nine articles we have endeavored to cover the practical sections of Ephesians, linking the appropriate doctrinal section with each practical section. To condense the material to match the available space it was necessary to omit a great deal but we hope that we have been able to include the most important points. If these articles encourage readers to study Ephesians in greater detail we shall have achieved our purpose. There is much helpful exposition in the following books:

- (1) *Letters From Prison* (Stuart Allen)
 - (2) *The Testimony of the Lord's Prisoner* (C.H.Welch)
 - (3) *In Heavenly Places** (C.H.Welch)
- (*on the web site: <http://www.charleswelch.net>)

The Ministry of Consolation

No.3

“Together, with them” (1 Thess. 4:17)

The view which the enlightened believer upon conversion receives of the carnal nature, often produces in certain minds an unscriptural repudiation of homely and domestic affections. To such their Lord is ‘an austere man’, and holiness is synonymous with mortification. To such the possibility of practical combination of holiness and natural affection does not seem possible. The Apostle when foretelling the apostate times of the end could place side by side, “unholy, without natural affection” (2 Tim.3:1,2) and could enjoin young widows to remarry (1 Tim.5:14).

To that man of God there was nothing carnal in the full appreciation of God’s Fatherly care, and while being thoroughly conversant with the joys of independence in the midst of privation, he could nevertheless write of creature comforts, that God had given them “richly to enjoy”.

There are many, who by the workings of the selfsame austerity, are deprived of the ‘comfort of the Scriptures’ with references to “that blessed hope”. Waiving for a moment the dispensational position of 1 Thessalonians 4, and seeking from it the comfort for which it was primarily written, we would draw attention to one feature which has gripped our own hearts, and turned tears of sorrow into those of joy. The austere view, touched upon above, tends to rule out the God-given natural affection that should find a sanctified place in the hope of the believer. True it is that our hope is not to meet the Lord, be with Him and be like Him, whether the meeting take place on earth, in the air, or far above all.

Some there are who have become persuaded that the meeting once again of loved ones is not to be uttered in the same breath. Yet, we feel sure that many whose lips with all sincerity give utterance to these self-effacing words, will often feel their hearts crying out for the assurance that the hope of meeting their Lord need not banish into the background the hope of meeting their loved ones too.

It is here where the consolation of the Scripture is fuller and kinder than the conceptions of man. The Divine order we find in 1 Thess. 4:17 is “together with them...to meet the Lord”. There will be no furtive glances, no aching hearts, when we enter into the presence of the Saviour. All we have loved and lost in the faith shall meet again, and TOGETHER WITH THEM (and not otherwise) shall we MEET THE LORD, and ever in unbroken unity be with Him.

“Wherefore comfort one another *with these words*” (verse 18).

CHARLES WELCH