

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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Dear Fellow-members,

Each time we write a preface to a volume of *The Berean Expositor* we cannot help but express our thanks and gratitude to the Lord and to all who have laboured to make these volumes possible. Difficulties increase all over the world, yet we are still able by the grace of God to issue this witness to the truth of His Word and the abundant spiritual riches contained therein.

We send this 50th volume with the prayer that the Lord will use it mightily to open blind eyes and to build up and strengthen the members of His Body so that they may be better able to give a constant and faithful witness to His Truth.

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Reflections of Isaiah, p.31

Editor: As we indicated in the first of this series of nine studies on Isaiah, these manuscripts of the late Mr. Welch turned up unexpectedly amongst old papers. It would seem that much that Mr. Welch was anticipating at the end of this article has been included in volumes XXXIV and XXXV of *The Berean Expositor*, but to what extent other material has been lost we cannot say.

Archaic and Obsolete Words of the Authorized Version.

No.17. pp. 19, 20

SIMPLICITY. It is difficult to know why the A.V. translators used ‘simplicity’ in Rom. xii. 8, “he that giveth, let him do it with *simplicity*”, specially as they have correctly rendered it “liberality” in II Cor. viii. 2. The Greek word means generosity or bountifulness which comes from singleness of mind. The Apostle is exhorting giving to be done with liberality.

SITH is an ancient word meaning ‘since’ and occurs once in the Bible in Ezek.xxxv.6 “*Sith* thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee”. Shakespeare uses it a number of times.

SKILL. There is an obsolete phrase “can skill” used in Solomon’s message to Hiram, king of Tyre. “There is not among us any that *can skill* to hew timber like unto the Sidonians.” The words mean “have knowledge” or “know how to do” a thing. “Can skill of” occurs in II Chron. xxxiv. 12 “all that *could skill of* instruments of music”, meaning skilful with musical instruments.

SLEIGHT has practically passed out of modern usage except in phrases like “sleight of hand” used in juggling or tricks. ‘Sleight’ in Eph. iv. 14 means literally dice-playing, cheating or trickery, which is a warning against the wiles of the arch-deceiver, Satan.

SLIME was a word Tyndale used in his translation and the A.V. translators followed him “*Slime* they had for mortar” (Gen. xi. 3). “The vale of Siddim was full of *slime pits*”. The Hebrew word means bitumen or asphalt and the Greek Septuagint uses *asphaltos*. Bitumen should be used in these contexts.

SNUFF. This is an Elizabethan word which means to inhale the breath audibly. To “snuff at” something expressed disdain or contempt. This is now replaced by “sniff at”. Mal. i. 6-14 accuses the priests of apostasy and showing contempt for the altar. Verse 13 says “ye *snuffed* at it”. We should say now “You sniffed at it” (in contempt).

SOTTISH. Up to the 17th century a ‘sot’ was a foolish person and then the word ‘besotted’ became restricted to drunkards. “Sottish” occurs once in our old English translation, “For My people is foolish, they have not known Me; they are *sottish* children: they have none understanding” (Jer. iv. 22). “Stupid” would be the modern equivalent here.

STILL. The old sense of this word meant continually, constantly. In Psa. lxxxiv. 4 we read “Blessed are they who dwell in Thy house; they will be *still* praising Thee” meaning “they will be *ever* singing Thy praise”. May this constant attitude of praise and thanksgiving be ours!

STOMACHER. This old word means an ornamental covering for the chest which was worn by women under the bodice. The word in the original means a rich rope, so its one occurrence in Isa. iii. 24 should read “. . . . instead of a rich rope, a girding of sackcloth”.

STRAIN AT. “Strain at a gnat” (Matt. xxiii. 24) does not represent what the Greek actually says, which should read “strain *out* a gnat”, and was thus correctly rendered by Tyndale and all the other sixteenth century versions. There is the possibility that this “strain at” was a printer’s error which was never corrected. This was the opinion of Bishop Lightfoot and Archbishop French (*Trench*). If this was not true, it is difficult to see how the A.V. translators made this mistake. “Strain *out* a gnat” is correct and understandable.

No.18. p. 40

STRAWED. This is the past tense of the obsolete verb ‘straw’, which means the same as ‘strew’. We read in Exod. xxxii. 20 that Moses burnt the golden calf which Aaron had made, “and ground it to powder and *strawed* it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink it”. II Chron. xxxiv. 4 tells us that king Josiah “brake in pieces” the images Israel had been worshipping “and made dust of them and *strowed* it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them”. In Matt. xxi. 8 we read of those who cut down branches of trees and “*strawed* them in the way” of the Lord Jesus as He came to Jerusalem. In Matt. xxv. 24-26 a different word is used in the Greek and means “to winnow”: “. . . . An hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not *strawed*”. The last phrase should read “gathering where you did not winnow”.

No.19. pp. 99, 100

STUDY. In the verse so well known and vital to most of us who read this Bible study magazine (II Tim. ii. 15) it is important to realize that the Apostle Paul is not referring to study books. The Greek verb *spoudazo* means “be zealous”, “be keen” to do a thing. In II Tim. iv. 21 it is rendered “*do thy diligence* to come before winter” which in modern English means “do your utmost to come before winter” because of the difficulty of traveling at that time of the year. We can be keen about many things, some of which are not really important, but the keenness of II Tim. ii. 15 is absolutely vital to the believer who earnestly desires to win the Lord’s approval of his service and to stand before Him in resurrection unashamed.

SUBURBS. This word occurs over 100 times in our A.V., but hardly has the modern meaning of the word which is now kept to the outskirts of a city. *Migrash* means “common or pasture lands”.

SUCCOUR. This old word comes from the Latin through the French and means “to run to the aid of”. In Rom. xvi. 1, 2, Paul commends “Phoebe, our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you, for she hath been a *succourer* of many and of myself also”. We know nothing of this Christian woman who was probably of some wealth and importance and could afford to aid and give hospitality to the Apostle and others in their journeys. Arndt and Gingrich translate, “she has been of great assistance to many, including myself”.

SUFFER. This word is often used in the A.V. as it is in modern English, meaning to feel pain and endure hardship. But it is often used in the nearly obsolete sense of “permit”. The Lord said, “Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. xix. 14). This is not an injunction to tolerate little children, but the meaning is “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them”. All the modern versions reject the word “suffer” owing to its change of meaning today.

SWELL, SWELLING. There is one reference in the A.V. which is not clear from the standpoint of modern English. “The swelling of Jordan” (Jer. xii. 5; xlix. 19; 1. 44) does not refer to a swelling flood of water, but to the lush vegetation on its banks. Jeremiah xii. 5 reads “If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trusteth, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the *swelling* of Jordan?” This is not very understandable today. The R.S.V. here is much better, “If you have raced with men

on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? And if in a safe land you fall down, how will you do in the *jungle* of the Jordan?"

In II Cor. xii. 20 the Apostle Paul mentions a list of sins which he fears he will find in the Corinthian church. Among these are "swellings" which means, in modern English, conceit.

No.20. pp. 139, 140

TABERING. This obsolete word occurs once in Nahum ii. 6, 7 where we read ". . . she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves, *tabering* upon their breasts". "Taber" meant a drum and the verb "taber" meant "to beat as upon a drum". The lamenting maidens, beating upon their breasts in dismay, are a natural part of the context.

TABRET is the diminutive of 'taber', meaning a small drum or tambourine. Sometimes the A.V. translates it as 'timbrel'.

TACHE. This old word means a fastening which links two parts together. Originally the word "tack" had the same meaning and both are connected with "attach" and "detach". In Exodus "tache" describes the golden clasps that fitted into the loops on the Tabernacle curtains to hold them together.

TAKEN WITH THE MANNER. In Numb. v. 11-31 we have the hypothetical case of a wife's infidelity and the statement if "there be no witness against her, neither she be *taken with the manner*". This phrase was used by Tyndale who greatly influenced the A.V. translators. It means "taken in the act". The word 'manner' came from 'mainour', an Anglo-French term and refers to someone who is discovered doing something unlawful.

TEACHER. The word *didaskalos* is frequently used of the Lord Jesus in His earthly ministry, but this fact is veiled from the reader because 41 times the A.V. renders the word 'master' instead of 'teacher' which they only use once in connection with His witness. The Lord chose the role of teacher in His ministry to men. How wise were those who listened and responded to this greatest of all teachers! In James iii. 1 we have "My brethren, be not many *masters*, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation". The word is 'teachers' and James is reminding his readers of the deeper responsibility a teacher has than the pupil. While it is a glad privilege to teach the truth of the Scriptures, all teachers should constantly remember that there is the judgment seat of Christ to face in the next life when their service will come under His review. Teaching

is therefore a solemn responsibility, for God does not treat lightly those who have wrongly taught and misled others.

The word 'master' meaning a 'teacher' probably came from the usage in schools where teachers are called 'masters'. "Doctor" also originally meant a teacher. The earthly parents of the Lord Jesus, found Him "sitting in the midst of the *doctors*" in the Temple. He was sitting among the teachers. A "doctor of law" (Luke v. 17; Acts v. 34) stands for a "teacher of the law".

TELL. This occurs 8 times in the obsolete sense of number or count. The Lord said to Abram "Look now toward and *tell* the stars, if thou be able to number them". The command was to count the stars. "They *told* the money" (II Kings xii. 10) would be in modern English "they *counted* the money". "I may *tell* all my bones" (Psa. xxii. 17) means "I can *count* all my bones".

TEMPERANCE. This word in the Bible must not be restricted to alcohol. It means *self-control* and is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22, 23). In I Cor. ix. 25 Paul states "every man that striveth for the mastery is *temperate* in all things". The modern equivalent is "Every athlete exercises *self-control* in all things". Other occurrences are Acts xxiv. 25 and Titus i. 7, 8.

No.21. p. 160

TEMPT, TEMPTATION. These words are sometimes used in the Scriptures meaning "to put to the test", "make trial of" without any sense of enticing to sin and they need to be used with care, specially when applied to God. "And it came to pass after these things, that God did *tempt* Abraham" (Gen. xxi. 1). This means "God tested Abraham". In no sense did God try to lead Abraham to commit sin. James i. 13, 14 asserts, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed".

TENDER EYED. The Scriptures testify to the fact that Jacob preferred Rachel to Leah. "Leah was *tender eyed*, but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured". This does not mean that Leah had beautiful or attractive eyes, but rather that her eyes were weak. The Septuagint and the Hebrew make this clear.

THOUGHT. This word is found 13 times in the Scriptures in the sense of anxiety or worry and it is important to know this, otherwise quite the wrong sense of a passage may be taken. "Take no thought for the morrow" in the sermon on the mount means "Do not

worry about tomorrow” (Matt. vi. 34). Not to make legitimate provision for the future is a sin as I Tim. v. 8 shows: “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel (unbeliever)”. It is worry regarding future things for which he has made provision, that the Lord wants to save us from.

TIRE. This word has no connection with tiredness or exhaustion, but is a shortened form of ‘attire’. As a substantive it means an ornament or headdress and as a verb it means to adorn. “Bind the *tire* of thine head upon thee” (Ezek. xxiv. 17) means “bind on your turban”. “Round *tires* like the moon” (Isa. iii. 18) were crescent-shaped ornaments that were worn by women.

No.22. pp. 207 - 209

TO. This common word occurs hundreds of times in our English Version, but in two passages it is used in an obsolete sense. “I have a Levite *to* my priest” (Judges xvii. 13) and in Matt. iii. 9 “We have Abraham *to* our father”. In these cases it is used in an archaic sense, meaning “for”, “by way of”, “in the capacity of”. With this meaning it can also be found in Shakespeare and Spenser.

TRIBUTE. The A.V. never uses this word in the modern sense of praise. It means a tax paid or compulsory work by a vassal or subject state. In Josh. xvii. 13 Israel “put the Canaanites to tribute” means “put the Canaanites to forced labour”. II Sam. xx. 24 reads “Adoram was over the tribute” and this is equivalent to “Adoram was in charge of the forced labour”. Solomon likewise used conscription “upon those did Solomon levy a *tribute* of bondservice unto this day” (I Kings ix. 21) the meaning of which is “these Solomon made a forced levy of slaves, and so they are to this day”.

TROW is an old word meaning “think”, “to be of opinion”, and occurs once in Luke xvii. 9, “Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I *throw* not”.

TRUE is sometimes used in the A.V. in an archaic sense. “We are *true* men, thy servants are no spies”. Here true means honest. In John xix. 35 we have “And he that saw it bear record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that *he saith true*, that ye might believe”. Today we would render it “He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true and he knows that he speaks the truth, that you also may believe”.

TURTLE. The A.V. uses this word five times for the turtle-dove and not the animal. The Song of Solomon ii. 12 is a well known sentence “. . . . the voice of the *turtle* is heard in our land” and it would seem that “turtle” was used in a more endearing sense than “turtle-dove”.

TUTOR. In its one occurrence in our old English Version (Gal. iv. 1, 2) the word does not mean a teacher, but a *guardian* and this was its meaning in 1611. The Apostle Paul is dealing with the position of a young person who was not fully grown up. The N.I.V. renders the verses, “What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father”.

TWAIN. This old word has the meaning of “two”. “Which of the *twain* will ye that I release unto you?” means “which of the two do you want me to release for you?”. “For to make in Himself of *twain* one new man” (Eph. ii. 13-18) in modern English would be “in order that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two (Jew and Gentile)”. It is important to note that the word ‘make’ should be rendered “create”. The joint-Body of Christ is an entirely new creation taken from Jewish and Gentile believers, in which the status of Jew and Gentile has completely vanished and a new company of the redeemed has been formed with a new destiny in view—the heavenly places where Christ is now enthroned (Eph. ii. 6).

VAINGLORY. This word means idle boasting or conceit “Let nothing be done through strife or *vainglory*” (Phil. ii. 3) is a warning against warring and empty conceit, springing from the parent sin of pride which is so detested by the Lord.

VANITY. In the A.V. the word is never used in the modern sense of conceit which is inherent in “vainglory”. It means emptiness, worthlessness, futility and is one of the key words of Ecclesiastes where so many things of this world, now ruined by sin and Satan, are regarded as empty and devoid of any lasting or eternal worth. Often it is connected with idols and idolatry. “Are there any among the *vanities* of the Gentiles that can cause rain?” (Jer. xiv. 22), means “can any of the false gods of the nations bring rain?”. In Jer. viii. 19 “strange vanities” refers to foreign idols. “Lying vanities” in Psa. xxxi. 6 are vain idols. God says in Deut. xxxii. 21, “They have provoked Me to anger with their *vanities*”, meaning their idolatry.

VEX. In Elizabethan English this word had a much stronger meaning than it has today, when it usually means little more than irritation. In 1611 the word stood for physical aggression, to hurt, afflict or torment. In Exod. xxii. 21 “to *vex* a stranger” meant to hurt or harm a stranger. In the N.T. the son who was “lunatic and *sore vexed*”

means he was an epileptic who “suffered terribly”. “Those vexed with unclean spirits” were afflicted or harmed by unclean spirits.

VEXATION. In the same way, this was a strong term in the sixteenth century for terror or anguish. “It shall be a *vexation* to understand the report” is better rendered in the R.V. “. . . . it shall be naught but terror to understand the message”.

VILE. Originally this word from the Latin *vilis* meant lowly, cheap or worthless. Later on it acquired the meaning of disgusting either morally or physically, but this meaning is quite absent from this word as used in the Bible. The A.V. translators were fond of ‘vile’ which they used in order to translate a number of different Hebrew words. When Job said “I am vile” (Job xl. 4) what he really meant was “I am nothing”, “of no value”. In the N.T., Phil. iii. 21 in the A.V. talks about “the *vile* body”, but here the Greek word means lowly or humble. There is nothing vile in the modern sense with respect to our bodies. It is rather “the body of our humiliation or humbling”. In James.ii.2 we have a poor man coming into the synagogue in “*vile* raiment”. This meant “shabby clothing” because of his poverty. There was nothing disgraceful about it.

VIRTUE. In two of its occurrences in the N.T. the word virtue is misleading in the A.V. The Lord said “Somebody touched Me; for I perceive *virtue* is gone out of Me” (Luke viii. 46). Virtue here and in Luke vi. 19 is *dunamis* power. The Lord sensed that *power* had left Him, not virtue.

The Book of the PSALMS

No.1. pp. 45 - 50

The O.T. Scriptures were divided into three parts and we find the Lord Jesus recognizing this in Luke xxiv. 44:

“And He saith unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.”

The third division, the Psalms, included more than the Psalms themselves and comprised in addition, Proverbs, Job, the Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. In the large, the Psalms were written (1) for public praise in the Temple, (2) for private experience and prayer (which covers all ages) and (3) prophecy, looking forward to the coming of Messiah and the establishment of the earthly phase of God's kingdom over the whole Gentile world through redeemed Israel. It has been said that the Psalms constitute Israel's hymn book and while this is true, they also cover a wider ground.

The Psalms are divided into five books each ending with a doxology and a double or single Amen except the last one Psa. cl. Book 1, Psa. i.-xli.; Book 2, Psa. xlii.-lxxii.; Book 3, Psa. lxxiii.-lxxxix.; Book 4, Psa. xc.-cvi.; Book 5, Psa. cvii.-cl. These five books have been compared with the Mosaic Pentateuch and their arrangement is ancient although there is not unanimous opinion as to when they were given their present form.

The Authorship and Age.

These two matters are obviously related, for if we are sure of the authorship, it would not be difficult to fix the date. It has been fashionable for certain critics to assume late dates for the greater number of the Psalms and to find their origin in the later Persian and Greek periods, and in the Maccabean age. There is no need for this, for the heavy weight of evidence is for the major portion of the Psalms to have been written from David to Hezekiah (B.C.1000 to B.C.700 and the rest probably belong in the main to the exilic and post-exilic periods). This does not mean that we can pronounce with certainty the actual year in which they were written. Out of the 150 Psalms, 101 are related to authors by their title. Of these 73 are attributed to David, 10 to the school of Korah, 12 to the school of Asaph, 2 to Solomon, 1 to Ethan, 1 to Heman, 1 to Moses and 50 are anonymous.

We have the N.T. to guide and help us on this question of authorship. This will certainly carry weight with those who believe in the divine origin of the Word of God. The unbelieving critic alas, will not be impressed. No less an authority than the Lord Jesus Christ stated that David wrote Psa. cx.:

“ Jesus asked them (the Pharisees), saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He? They say unto Him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth *David in spirit call Him Lord*, saying, the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool?” (Matthew xxii. 41-44; Psa. cx. 1 and see Luke xx. 41-43).

In Mark’s account the Lord Jesus adds the fact that in saying the words of Psa. cx. 1, David spoke *by the Holy Ghost*, so we have a doubly divine guarantee of the human authorship of this Psalm. Those who reject this are deliberately flouting the Holy Spirit and the One Who said, “I am the Truth” (John xiv. 6). Not only this, but the book of the Acts asserts that David spoke before concerning the treachery of Judas and did so “by the Holy Ghost” (Acts i. 16-18; Psa. xli. 9; John xiii. 18). In Acts iv. 25 we are assured that David wrote Psa. ii.

Again, the Apostle Paul in Rom. iv. 6, 7 stated:

“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered” (Psa. xxxii. 1, 2).

Also in Rom. xi. 9:

“And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompense unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway” (Psa. lxix. 22, 23).

In addition we have the testimony of Hebrews that David is the author of Psa. xcv.:

“ Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (Heb. iv. 7).

This same context dealing with Psa. xcv. is quoted more fully in Heb. ii. 7-11 and declared to be the words of the Holy Ghost (Heb. iii. 7), so once more God has given a double testimony to the truth and human authorship of this Psalm and this will never be questioned by any who revere the Word of God as the Word of Truth.

If Hezekiah’s “My songs” (Isa. xxxviii. 20) were ever incorporated into the Psalter, they will surely be the ten anonymous *Songs of Degrees*, for reasons that will be given later in this series of studies. There is no doubt that the foundation of the Psalms is Davidic. A. F. Kirkpatrick says:

“with the son of Jesse a new era of religious poetry commenced. He also was the originator of the Temple liturgy (I Chron. xxv.). His skill as a poet and musician, and his interest in the development of religious music are attested by the earliest records. The leaders of the return from the exile believed themselves to be restoring his institutions” (*The Book of Psalms*).

However, we must remember that the Psalms were not the earliest hymns. We have the song of Moses (Exod. xv. 1-19); of Miriam (Exod. xv. 20, 21); of Deborah (Judg.v.1) and of Hannah (a prayer, but surely praise as well, I Sam. ii. 1-10).

As regards the ancient titles of the Psalms we shall be considering these in another study. One recurring title is: *To (or for) the Chief Musician*. It occurs in connection with fifty-five Psalms. These must have been composed and later handed over to the choir master of the Temple for use as hymns of praise and worship in the Temple services.

Systematic training in music started with the schools of the prophets inaugurated by Samuel (see I Sam. x. 5) and note the association with prophecy. This is confirmed in I Chron. xxv. 1-3:

“Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, *who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals*” (and note verses 2 and 3).

Note also the early reference to music in Gen. xxxi. 26, 27. Music played a large part in the worship of the Lord as described in the O.T. and this was all in accordance with His mind and will. As regards musical instruments themselves we are not certain of some of them and their characteristics. Psalteries and harps would be stringed instruments. Organs would be nothing like our modern instruments but would be reed pipes. Trumpets were silver and ram’s horns. The tabret was like the tambourine and the timbrel was a drum. Could we have heard the sound of these O.T. orchestras and the music they played, more than likely we should have been puzzled. Our Western ears would have heard nothing like it. It is practically certain that there was no harmony as we know it today, but singing was in unison or in octaves, possibly like plain-song and the natural speech rhythm we now have in singing the psalms. This does not mean that such music was not impressive. One has only to read the descriptions in the O.T. of special occasions when praise and rejoicing were accorded to the Lord. Such a time was the procession of the Ark as recorded in II Sam. vi. 5:

“And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets and cymbals” (see also I Chron. xv. & xvi. and note xv.16,27,28; xvi.41,42).

Surely two of the most impressive occasions were the crowning of Solomon and the dedication of the Temple:

“So when David was old and full of days he made Solomon his son king over Israel and four thousand praised the Lord with the instruments which I made, said David to praise therewith” (I Chron. xxiii. 1, 5).

Imagine an orchestra of 4,000 players! We sometimes go in for massed bands today but seldom is there anything to match this! The number of the choir is given as 288 in I Chron. xxv. 7, small by comparison, but this chapter is dealing with the normal services of the Temple.

At the dedication of the Temple to the Lord we have the striking detail that is given in II Chron. v., and the whole chapter v. should be read. Here is the conclusion:

“Also the Levites, which were the singers having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets. It came to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God” (verses 12-14).

What an uplifting yet awe-inspiring scene and sound this must have been, and the Lord accepted it as a token of praise when He entered with His overwhelming glory to claim His house.

When one thinks of the arguments and upsets that have occurred in some sections of Christendom over the introduction of instruments such as the organ to support the singing, one wonders what the objectors would have felt like had they been present on this great occasion! Would they have been offended or joined wholeheartedly in the paean of praise? We have little doubt as to this.

We know of course that undue emphasis on music can be a snare in public worship, specially when the praise is coming from the lips only and not from the heart. But then anything that is out of proportion can become a snare. Holiness is *whole-ness* and *balance* and we do well always to remember this. To hear the Lord’s praise in the Temple must have been an unforgettable and uplifting experience. May all our praise today when we meet together be likewise, as with heart and voice we honour and worship Him Who loved us and gave Himself for us. Let us never forget that the Lord listens to our praise as much as our prayers and with that in view we should give Him our best even though this is imperfect. May the Lord keep us ever praising and thanking Him. This is such a bulwark against failure and declension!

No.2. pp. 66 - 72

One of the things that the diligent student of the Psalms discovers is their amazing range of feeling and expression. It has been said there is no human experience that is missing from this part of the O.T. We give some indication of the wide range covered by various Psalms.

- (1) Prayers for blessing and protection (lxxxvi., cii.).
- (2) Psalms of praise for special mercies, the wonders of creation, the majesty of God (xlvi., lxviii., civ.).
- (3) Psalms asking for divine intervention and deliverance from danger, calamity, enemies and sickness (xxxviii., lxxxviii.).
- (4) Confession of faith that God is Creator, King over the earth, Judge and moral Ruler of the universe (xxxii., xciv., xcvi., cxv., cxxxvi.).
- (5) Psalms of penitence for sin of which there are *seven* (vi., xxxi., xxxviii., li., cii., cxxx., cxliii.).
- (6) Intercession for the king, the people, the house of David, and Jerusalem (xxi., xlvi., lxxxix., cxv.).
- (7) Imprecatory Psalms (xxxv., xlix., cix.).
- (8) Psalm of wisdom and religious instruction (xxxvii., xlix., cxv., etc.).
- (9) Experimental Psalms which deal with the strange experiences that befall God's people and the puzzling prosperity of the wicked (xvi., xlix., xciv., etc.).
- (10) Psalms which praise the greatness of the Torah (the Law) and the Word of God generally (cxix.).

With this great variety and coverage it is no wonder that believers of all ages have been attracted to the Psalms.

The Psalm Titles.

The meaning of these titles has been obscure since ancient times and it is apparent that the key to their understanding had been lost very early. Bible students of all schools have acknowledged this. In his work on the Psalms, Bishop Jebb stated that "so great are the difficulties attending this enquiry, that, in many instances, little more than conjectures can be offered" (vol.2 p.133). Delitzsch declared that "the Septuagint found them already in existence and did not understand them the key to their comprehension must have been lost very early" (*Commentary on the Psalms*).

And yet there is general agreement that these titles form a part of the primitive sacred text and are connected in some way with the Temple worship.

Early in this century, however, the key was discovered by Dr. J. W. Thirtle who was editor of *The Christian* at this time. He noticed that the third chapter of Habakkuk was a typical Psalm with a superscription and subscription. The superscription was "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon *Shigionoth*" (verse 1). Verses 2-19 give the Psalm proper. At the end we have the well-known phrase "To the chief Musician" (upon *Neginoth*). If

we look at the Psalms in our English Bible we note that the phrase “To the chief Musician” is always found at the *beginning* of a Psalm, or, in other words, as a superscription. We should bear in mind that, in the original manuscript, there was no break or division between the various Psalms. There is not even a space between the lines from the beginning to the end of a page. Consequently, when the Psalms were separated, a division had to be made somewhere and our Bibles follow the Septuagint who consistently divided and put the phrase “To the chief Musician” at the *top* of the Psalm, whereas Hab. iii. makes it clear that this should have been left as the *subscription* of the preceding Psalm. In other words some of these titles have got appended to the wrong Psalm!

No wonder that Bible commentators have been puzzled in the past and could find no connection in meaning of the title to the Psalm to which it was attached. If we read Hezekiah’s psalm of praise recorded in Isa. xxxviii. 9-20, we find he ends in a similar way to the phrase “To the chief Musician”. He says “. . . . therefore we will sing my songs *to the stringed instruments* all the days of our life in the house of the Lord” (20).

The Psalms therefore had three divisions, not two. (1) The superscription, (2) The Psalm proper, (3) The subscription, “To the chief Musician”. It is good to know that the Psalm titles have been correctly appended in *The Companion Bible*, though we do not know of any other edition of the Bible where this has been done.

Once these titles are in their right position they begin to shed light on the Psalm to which they are properly attached. They do not solve every problem as, in some cases, there is not agreement among scholars as to the exact meaning of some of the Hebrew words. As an example of the help in understanding that Dr. Thirtle’s discovery gives us, we can look at Psa. lv. In our A.V. the phrase “To the chief Musician upon *Jonath-elem-rechokim*” stands as part of the *superscription* of Psa. lvi. Using the key given to us we should place it as the *subscription* to the previous Psalm which is lv. The words mean “the dove of the distant woods” and we shall search Psa. lvi. in vain for any reference either literally or figuratively to a dove. But the moment we connect it with the 55th Psalm we cannot help but notice that in verse 6 David says:

“. . . . oh that I had *wings like a dove!* for then would I fly away, and be at rest.”

David likens himself to a dove. He was in deep trouble through the rebellion of Absalom recorded in II Samuel xv.-xix. Like Hezekiah, “he mourned as a dove” (Isa.xxxviii.14). He tells of his weeping, his fearfulness and trembling and how he longed to be like a dove, to fly away and be at rest (verses 4-8). Not only did he face the deep trouble Absalom’s insurrection brought, but he was deserted by his close friend Ahithophel to whom he alludes in verses 12-14:

“For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide and my familiar friend (R.V.). We took sweet counsel together and walked unto the house of God in company.”

David knew the bitter experience of being let down and deserted by a close friend. With all these troubles pressing upon him, no wonder he longed to be like a dove and fly

away and be freed from these exceedingly painful happenings. David was going through a similar trial as his greater Son centuries later Who was betrayed by one of his intimate circle, namely Judas. Judas, like Ahithophel, went and hanged himself (II Sam. xvii. 23; Matt. xxvii. 5-8).

At this juncture it will be helpful for us to look at the meaning of some of the Hebrew words which occur in connection with the Psalm titles.

Shoshannim and Gittith.

The first word occurs in connection with Psa. xlv. and lxviii. (not xlv. and lxix. as in the A.V.). Certain Psalms were used on special occasions in the Temple worship just as there are some designated as “proper Psalms” for certain days in our modern churches. The great feasts of Passover and Tabernacles would certainly have their own proper Psalms, for they were the first and last of Jehovah’s feasts as commanded in Lev. xxiii. and marked the beginning and ending of Israel’s religious year which covered a span of seven months. *Shoshannim* means *lilies* and *gittith* means *wine-presses*. Passover was the spring feast and Tabernacles was the autumn feast. The universal symbol of spring is *flower* and of autumn, *fruit*. In Bible lands, lilies are spring flowers and grapes and pomegranates are fruits of autumn. Moreover, the nation of Israel is repeatedly symbolized as a *vine* (Isa. v. 1-7; xxvii.2-6; Jer. ii. 21; xii. 10; Psa. lxxx. 8; Hos. x. 1). It was also represented as a lily (see 2 Esdras 5:23-28 R.V. and Hos. 14:5-7). Lilies and pomegranates were seen everywhere in the Temple (I Kings vii. 18-20).

Thus the lily represented spring and the spring feast of Passover which sets forth *redemption*. Pomegranates represented autumn and the feast of Tabernacles which shadows forth the realization of the earthly kingdom with redeemed Israel enjoying their earthly inheritance and God’s purpose for the whole earth at last bearing fruit and becoming a wonderful reality.

Shoshannim is also connected with the word *eduth* which means *testimony* and belongs to Psa. lix. and lxxix. not lx. and lxxx. as in the A.V. The probability is that these Psalms were linked with the conclusion of Passover, 50 days later, namely Pentecost, or the Feast of weeks. This was to be done when Israel came into the promised land. It could not be kept in the wilderness. Passover celebrates and portrays the Lord’s mighty deliverance of His people from the bondage of Egypt. The divine purpose was not complete until they *set foot in the land* (Exod. iii. 8; Lev. xxiii. 10-21). Moses testifies “He brought us out from thence *that He might bring us in*” (Deut. vi. 23). This conclusion was celebrated in the two Psalms mentioned above, even though there were enemies in the land, yet in the power of Jehovah they could be subdued.

Muth-labben.

This is generally translated as meaning “the death of the champion” and interpreted by some of Goliath. It is of course linked with Psa. viii. and not Psa. ix. as in our English version. The Septuagint however renders it quite differently. “Concerning the secrets of

the Son” and here it seems clear that the Septuagint translators did understand the original Hebrew. Psa. viii. concerns the first Adam, the son of God and his earthly dominion, typical of the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. ii. 6-9) and His final exaltation over all creation. This tremendous truth was not revealed at once in the Scriptures. Little by little the divine purpose concerning His final triumph is revealed and comes to its climax in Eph. i. and Phil. ii. In Ephesians Paul declares his knowledge concerning the Secret (mystery) of Christ, revealed to him by that same exalted One and in his allusion to Psalm viii. (Eph. i. 17-23) dominion over earthly things gives way to universal dominion in heaven as well as earth (verses 20-22). Here the secret concerning the Lord’s final exaltation “far above all” is revealed in all its fulness. Those who want fuller details should consult *The Alphabetical Analysis* Part 4 p.211.

Mahalath.

This word is connected with Psa. lii. (not liii.) and is linked with the word *leannoth* with reference to Psa. lxxxvii. (not lxxxviii.). As opposed to the above, it is evident here that the translators of the Septuagint were baffled, for they do not attempt to translate the word but just transliterate it as *macleth* which has no meaning whatsoever. Some ancient interpreters rendered the word *For, or in the Dance*, but could see no connection with this title and the psalms to which it is attached (liii. and lxxxviii.) in our English translation. Directly they are linked with the previous Psalms the meaning becomes clear. In Psa. lii. the reference is to the Lord’s deliverance of Israel from the Philistines and Goliath’s blasphemous challenge (1-5). If we turn to I Sam. xviii. 6, 7 we read that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, *singing and dancing*, which expressed their rejoicing concerning David’s victory over Goliath. Twice afterwards this event was referred to as a great historical event (I Sam. xxi. 11 and xxix. 5).

The dancings and shouting (*Mahalath leannoth*) the title connected with Psa. lxxxvii. (not lxxxviii.) surely refer to the significant event in David’s life when the Ark was restored to Israel after being taken by the Philistines.

When David came to the throne, his first action was to bring up the Ark of God to Zion and II Sam. vi. gives us the account of this great event. In verses 14 and 15 we read:

“And David *danced* before the Lord with all his might so David and all the house of Israel brought up the Ark of Jehovah with *shouting* and with the sound of the trumpet.”

It was a time of great rejoicing. There was only one fit place for the Ark of God and that was Zion. Other places might make their boast and set forth their claims. Men might claim their citizenship of other cities, but there was one city that God delighted in and was yet to be the joy of the whole earth. The time would surely come when all the other boasts of earthly cities would fade into nothingness beside the privilege of being born in and belonging to Zion (Jerusalem). In the future earthly kingdom, it is this city that will be the premier one on the earth, both spiritually and commercially and from this

will radiate God's light and truth to the whole world through the mediation of saved and restored Israel.

Ajeleth Hash-Shahar (The Day-Dawn).

This title occurs once only and belongs rightly to Psa. xxi. as a subscription. The margin gives as its meaning, the *hind of the morning*. This is a common Eastern poetical expression for the dawning of the day. The figure is that of the rays of the rising sun shooting up above the horizon like horns before the sun actually appears, just as the horns of a deer might be seen above the rising ground before his body comes into view. It denotes therefore the rays of the sun, the first beams of light mounting up as is frequently seen in pictures of the sun rising. The Psalm title means the *day-dawn*, a lovely picture of the beginning of Messiah's reign, when the night and darkness of man's dominion will be abolished, and the light of the One Who declared Himself to be the light of the world will spread over the whole earth at His second coming. Psa. xxi. deals outwardly with David and his sovereignty, but it is prophetic of David's greater Son.

David uses the same beautiful poetic description of Messiah's kingdom in II.Sam.xxiii. 1-5:

“And He shall be as *the light of the morning, when the sun riseth*, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain”
(verse 4),

and the glories of the Lord's earthly kingdom are graphically described in Psa. lxxii., at the end of which we read “the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended” (verse 20). This does not mean that this Psalm was David's last prayer. It is rather that when the glorious prophecy of Psa. lxxii. is fulfilled, all David's prayers will be consummated and all his hopes wonderfully realized.

No.3. pp. 86 - 91

Al-Taschith (Destroy not).

The Psalms to which this title is properly attached are four: lvi., lvii., lviii. and lxxiv. *Al-Taschith* means ‘destroy not’ and these Psalms are a special appeal for mercy and justice at a time of crisis.

In the wilderness the Lord had threatened to destroy the whole nation of Israel and make another nation of Moses (Exod. xxxii. 10). Moses' reply is summed up in Deuteronomy ix. 25 and 26 “I prayed unto the Lord and said, O Lord God, *destroy not* Thy people and Thine inheritance”. These Psalms are a similar petition, bearing in mind the promise recorded in Deut. iv. 30, 31:

“When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto His voice; (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God); He will not forsake thee, *neither destroy thee*, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them.”

Nehiloth.

We keep this title to Psa. iv., not Psa. v. Some commentators derive the word from *chahal* to bore, which, by transition leads to the word ‘flute’. However, the ancient versions suggest another derivation. Aquila’s version of the Septuagint has “divisions of inheritance” and that of Symmachus “allotments”. The original Septuagint reads “concerning her that *inherits*” as the meaning of the title, evidently reading *Nehaloth* rather than *Nehiloth*. This gives us a deeper insight than the word ‘flute’. Jehovah was the inheritance of His people (Psa. xvi. 5 and see lxxiii. 26; cxix. 57; cxlii. 5) and this great inheritance was infinitely more than anything material. The Psalmist’s confidence and repose were therefore in the word (Psa. iv. 3, 7, 8) and he could sleep with the peace of God guarding his heart and mind. The Lord was his inheritance and he, in turn, was the inheritance of the Lord (verse 3).

The tendency of expositors has been to interpret most of these titles as musical expressions or musical instruments. As we have seen, there is no need for this. However, there are three words which are linked with the special choirs that sang in connection with the praise and worship of God. They are *Al alamoth* (relating to the maidens’ choir); *Sheminith*, meaning *the eighth* (division); and *Jeduthun* who was one of the three directors of the Temple worship and the music associated with it (I.Chron.xvi.41,42; xxv. 1-6; II Chron. v. 12). There is no need to regard *Jeduthun* as a musical instrument. If *alamoth* refers to the maidens’ choir, and there seems no reason to doubt it, then *sheminith* may refer to the male singers. I Chron. xv. 20 and 21 should be compared where these two divisions of the choir are mentioned. The word ‘on’ can be rendered ‘relating to’. As *sheminith* means eighth, it could refer to the octave, and the fact that the men would be singing an octave below the women. It is very probable that the singing was in unison and not in any form of harmony as we know it today. There are other various explanations which are little more than guesses and we do not think it necessary to mention them here.

Sheminith occurs only with Psa. v. and xi. *Alamoth* is found with Psa. xlv. and note the references to “king’s daughters”, “honourable women” (verse 9), “the daughter of Tyre” (verse 12), and “the virgin her companions” (verse 14).

We must also consider the words connected with literary form, such as *michtam*, *maschil*, *shiggaion* or *higgaion*. For *michtam* the A.V. has a ‘golden Psalm’ from *kethem*, gold. It seems more likely to be from *katam* to engrave as in Jer. ii. 22. It would then mean something written in a permanent form which cannot be erased. There are 6 *michtam* Psalms (xvi., lvi., lvii., lviii., lix. and lx.). These are all David’s and are private, personal and direct.

Maschil means understanding and is attached to 13 Psalms (xxxii., xlii., xliv., xlv., lii., liii., liv., lv., lxxiv., lxxviii., lxxxviii., lxxxix., cxlii.). The *maschil* Psalms seem to be public rather than private and therefore have to do with public instructions (see Psalm xxxii. 8, 9).

The meaning of *shiggaion* is uncertain, but the most likely meaning is “crying aloud” either in joy or trouble. It is found in association with Psalms vii. The plural *shigionoth* is found in Habakkuk iii. 1.

Higgaion is derived from a word meaning to soliloquize, to speak to one’s self, hence to meditate. As a noun it would mean *meditation* and is found with Psalms ix. 16; xix. 14 and xcii. 3.

Neginoth is from *nagan* to strike, hence its connection with the striking or plucking of the strings of a musical instrument. The Psalms with which it is associated are iii., v., liii., liv., lxvi., lxxv. and Habakkuk iii. It may well be that the smiting goes deeper than the playing of instruments with strings, and refers to the smitings of affliction and difficulties.

The phrase *the chief Musician, lamenezach* occurs 55 times and designates the Psalms handed over to the leader of the Temple’s praise for singing and worship.

Selah. This is the word which has been given more variety of meanings than any other found in the Psalms. It occurs 74 times in the Bible, 71 times in the Psalms and many see in it nothing more than a musical direction. One cannot help feeling that a word occurring so frequently in the inspired Scriptures has a deeper meaning than this. It seems to mark the end of one section and the beginning of a new one. In other words it is a connecting link. The word derived from one of two roots, namely *salah*, to pause or *salal*, to lift up. It is a thought link either in development of the teaching or is antithetic and adds a contrast. The student should carefully note each usage and note what has preceded it and what follows.

The Songs of the Degrees.

Here again there are many opinions as to the interpretation of the word ‘degrees’ which means ‘steps’. Some have asserted that these were Psalms sung on the fifteen steps of the Temple, but we have no Scriptural or other evidence that there were fifteen steps. Other ideas include ‘a higher choir’, ‘a higher key’, or perhaps the going up of the Ark to Zion, or the going up of the Tribe to the feasts.

Dr Thistle pointed out that the definite article is used—*the* degrees which makes one ask what exactly are these degrees? The only degrees we read about in the Scriptures are those on the sundial of Ahaz, by which the shadow of the sun went backward. These were a sign from Jehovah in connection with Hezekiah that he would recover from his sickness. The reader should consult II Kings xx. 8-11. One of the great divines of the

17th century Dr. John Lightfoot (1602-75) suggested this interpretation over 300 years ago in his *Old Testament Chronology*.

These Songs of Degrees are 15 which correspond to the years added to Hezekiah's life, 10 of them are anonymous, corresponding to the number of degrees by which "the shadow of the sun went backward". These could have been by Hezekiah himself for he says in his praise and gratitude:

"The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing *my songs* to the stringed instruments all the days of our life *in the house of the Lord*" (Isa. xxxviii. 20).

These were evidently handed over to the chief Musician together with one Psalm by Solomon in the centre and 2 by David on either side. They find their counterpart in Hezekiah's life and for details of this the reader should consult Appendix 67 of *The Companion Bible*.

The Messianic character of the Psalms.

Not only are many of the Psalms intensely prophetic, looking forward to the establishment of God's kingdom on earth, but a large number are profoundly Messianic, and portray in advance the Lord Jesus Christ as Israel's Messiah, Redeemer and King. This is a very important aspect of the Psalms. We have the authority of the Lord Jesus Himself that the Psalms point forward to Him, for He said:

"All things must be fulfilled which were written in the Psalms concerning Me"
(Luke xxiv. 44).

Not only this, but we have the warrant of the N.T. that this is so, as the following references will make clear:

His Manhood.

"What is man that Thou art mindful of him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honour Thou hast put all things under his feet" (Psa. viii. 5, 6).

"What is man that Thou art mindful of him Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honour Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet But now we see not yet all things put under him, but *we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels*" (Heb. ii. 6-9).

His Sonship.

"I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son: this day have I begotten Thee" (Psa. ii. 7).

"For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee?" (Heb. i. 5).

"God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Acts xiii. 33).

His Lordship.

"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Psa. cx. 1).

“. . . . Jesus asked them what think ye of Christ? whose son is He? They say unto Him The son of David. He saith unto them, How then does David in spirit call Him Lord saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit Thou at My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool” (Matt. xxii. 41-45).

His Deity.

“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre” (Psa. xlv. 6).

“But unto *the Son* He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom” (Heb. i. 8).

His holiness.

“Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows” (Psa. xlv. 7).

“But unto the Son He saith Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows” (Heb. i. 8).

No.4. pp. 106 - 109

The Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ..

“The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psa. cx. 4).

“As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. v. 6).

His Kingship.

“Yet I have set My King upon My holy hill of Zion” (Psa. ii. 6).

“For the Lord is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king” (Psa. lxxxix. 18).

“And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. xix. 16, and see I Tim. vi. 14-16).

His conquests in the day of wrath.

“The Lord at Thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, He shall fill the places with the dead bodies, He shall wound the heads over many countries” (Psa. cx. 5, 6).

“And the kings of the earth, and the great men hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of His wrath is come and who shall be able to stand?” (Rev. vi. 15-17).

His Everlastingness.

“His Name shall endure for ever: His Name shall be continued as long as the sun and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed” (Psa. lxxii. 17).

“. . . . They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed: But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end” (Psa. cii. 25-27).

“But unto the Son He saith And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thine hands: They shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a

vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail” (Heb. i. 8-12).

His universal Sovereignty.

“He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth” (Psa. lxxii. 8).

“The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all” (Psa. ciii. 19).

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were 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).

“. . . . that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth” (Phil. ii. 10).

His obedience as the perfect Man.

“Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering Thou hast not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me. I delight to do Thy will O My God. Yea, Thy law is within My heart” (Psa. xl. 6-8).

“Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me), to do Thy will, O God” (Heb. x. 5-7).

His Zeal and His Sufferings.

“For the zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me” (Psa. lxxix. 9).

“He said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not My Father’s house an house of merchandise. And His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up” (John ii. 16, 17).

“For even Christ pleased not Himself: but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me” (Rom. xv. 3).

His Betrayal.

“Yea, Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of My bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (Psa. xli. 9).

“I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, he that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me” (John xiii. 18).

The disposal of His seamless robe.

“They part my garments among them, and cast lots for my vesture” (Psa. xxii. 18).

“They (the soldiers) said, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots” (John xix. 23, 24).

His thirst.

“They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (Psa. lxix. 21).

“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop and put it to His mouth” (John xix. 28, 29).

Yet not a bone of Him was broken.

“He keepeth all His bones: not one of them is broken” (Psa. xxxiv. 20; Exod. xii. 46).

“Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus they break not His legs for these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken” (John xix. 32-36).

His Death.

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and Thou hast brought me into the dust of death” (Psa. xxii. 14-18).

“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost (gave up His life)” (John xix. 30).

His Resurrection.

“I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (grave); neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption” (Psa. xvi. 8-10).

“. . . . Ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning Him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice and my flesh shall rest in hope: because Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (grave), neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption” (Acts ii. 23-27, compare also Psa. ii. 7 with Acts xiii. 33-36).

His Ascension.

“Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men” (Psa. lxxviii. 18).

“Wherefore He saith when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men” (Eph. iv. 8).

His Second Coming to the earth.

“Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth” (Psa. xcvi. 12, 13; xcviii. 8, 9 and compare the 4 Psalms xcvi.-xcix.).

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe . . .” (II Thess. i. 7-9; Matt. xxiv. 29-31 and many other N.T. Scriptures).

No.5. pp. 126 - 131

In our previous studies we have sought to make clear the profound Messianic character of many of the Psalms, which character is clearly endorsed by the N.T. usage of these Psalms. The majority of them are by David and the N.T. asserts that he was a prophet as well as being a king (Acts ii. 29-31). When we consider the complete testimony of the O.T. concerning the coming Messiah in all its detail, we can surely see how great was Israel's responsibility, for to them the O.T. was entrusted by God (Rom.iii.1,2). They were therefore entirely without excuse when they rejected and crucified their Messiah, Redeemer and King. This was indeed their climax sin.

Another important character of the Psalms is their historic element. It is true to say that there are sufficient references to places, people and events to construct a history from Adam to the time of David and Solomon. Psalms lxxviii., cv. and cvi. are outstanding for the use they make of Israel's past history and the nations who came into contact with them. We give an outline of this period from the Psalms which does not profess to be complete, but makes clear how fully the writers of the Psalms dealt with the various happenings and experiences of the people of Israel before their (psalmist's) time:

The creation of man	Psa. viii.
The fall	xiv. 2, 3; li. 5; lviii. 3
Abraham	xlvi. 9
The Abrahamic covenant	cv. 9-12, 42
Melchizedek	cx. 4
Isaac	cv. 9
Jacob	xlvi. 7
Jacob the Nation	cv. 10 (plural)
Joseph	lxxvii. 15
His descent into Egypt	cv. 17
His imprisonment	cv. 18
His deliverance and exaltation	cv. 20-22
The famine in Egypt	cv. 16
The descent of Jacob and family into Egypt	cv. 23, 24
Israel's bondage in Egypt	cv. 25
Moses and Aaron	cv. 26
The plagues in Egypt	lxxviii. 12, 43-51; cv. 28-36
Israel's deliverance from Egypt	lxxviii. 51-54
The Red Sea divided	cxxxvi. 13
Israel's passage through the Sea	lxxviii. 13; cvi. 9
The overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts	cvi. 11; cxxxvi. 15
The wilderness journey	lxviii. 7
The cloudy and fiery pillar	lxxviii. 14
Water from the smitten rock	lxxviii. 15, 16
The manna and quails	lxxviii. 24-29
Meribah	lxxxi. 7
Israel's murmurings	lxxviii. 40
The fire of Taberah	lxxviii. 21

The judgment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram	cvi. 16-18
The worship of the calf at Horeb	cvi. 19, 20
The intercession of Moses	cvi. 23
The sin of Baal-peor	cvi. 28
The zeal of Phinehas	cvi. 30
The victory over Sihon and Og	cxxxvi. 19, 20
The inheritance of Canaan	cv. 44; cxxxvi. 21, 22
The unfaithfulness of Israel in the land	lxxviii. 55-58
The overthrow of Sisera and his hosts	lxxxiii. 9
The incidents relating to Oreb, Zeeb, Zebrah and Zalmunna	lxxxiii. 11
Samuel, the man of prayer	xcix. 6
David the shepherd chosen to be king	lxxviii. 70-72

The varied experiences of David are given full expression in the Psalms bearing his name. The latest historical event deals with the captivity of Israel in Babylon (Psa.cxxxvii.). It will be seen that a detailed history of Israel could be constructed from the Psalms alone and the historical content of the Psalms is of great importance.

We now intend to consider individual Psalms in more detail and commence with Psalm xix. This is one of the greatest of the Psalms in its comprehensiveness. It is in three parts. (1) The revelation of God in creation (verses 1-6). (2) The revelation of God in Scripture (verses 7-11). (3) The revelation of God in experience (verses 12-14). The opening section tells us that the creation is not just an inanimate collection of stars and planets, but rather they reflect the great glory of their Creator Who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only this, but they give a message, they speak as it were, and give knowledge to those who behold them and are willing to be taught. Gen. i. 14-19 informs us that the stars were set for “*signs*, and for seasons, and for days and years”. The Hebrew word for signs, *oth*, comes from a root, meaning to come. The stars are therefore concerning someone or something to come and those who understand them receive enlightenment as Psa. xix. declares. The zodiac marks the stages of the sun’s path through the heaven corresponding to the 12 months of the year. This is evidently referred to in Gen.xxxvii.9 in connection with Joseph’s dream of himself, his parents and brethren.

We should remember that the stars were all name by God (Psa. cxlvii. 4; Isa. xl. 26 R.V.), and they all originally must have had a meaning many of which have been lost. There are over 100 names preserved through the Arabic and Hebrew and are used by astronomers today. Some of them occur in Scripture though the meaning is not always certain. Three are found in Job ix. 9 (compare also xxxviii. 31, 32), Arcturus, Orion and Pleiades. Arcturus is connected with the Great Bear. Orion means a strong one (see Amos v. 8), and Pleiades the congregation of the judge. Thus the Word of God is not silent as the great antiquity of the signs and constellations. The twelve signs of the zodiac are the same as to the meaning of their names and their order, in all the ancient nations of the world. The Chinese, Chaldean and Egyptian records go back to more than B.C.2,000. The zodiacs in Egyptian temples are doubtless copies of zodiacs still more ancient, going back to B.C.4,000. The signs of the zodiacs have been preserved in order among all nations and ages, showing their common origin from one source. The figures or pictures on them have nothing to do with the grouping of stars. For instance in Virgo

there is nothing to suggest the shape of a woman. They must have been drawn around and connected with certain stars so that they might be identified and associated with them and their meaning and thus be handed down to posterity.

It seems clear that in these signs we have the truth preserved of Gen. iii. 15, the Coming One, He Who was to suffer and redeem and afterwards come into His glory as universal King. Jewish tradition asserts that the Bible astronomy was invented by Adam, Seth and Enoch who were, in their turn, taught by God. Thus for some 2,500 years, before the written Scriptures came into being, God's truth was enshrined in the heavens where no human hand could touch it. After the writing of the Scriptures there was no more need of this heavenly testimony, and its original teaching gradually faded away, finally degenerating into the mythologies and perverted ideas of the heathen.

Those who want to go into this subject with greater detail are referred to *The Witness of the Stars* by Dr. E. W. Bullinger and Appendix 12 of *The Companion Bible*.

In the 19th Psalm then, David extols the 'speech' or message of God which the heavens constantly declare to all the world. One must add to this the impressive wonder of the universe which bears eloquent testimony to overwhelming greatness of the Creator. The sun is represented as a bridegroom full of joy like a runner full of strength (xix. 5, 6).

Here the Psalm abruptly changes to the law of the Lord, the written Word. This has always baffled commentators, for, on the surface, this next section has nothing to do with the former one. But once we see that the heavens declared the truth of God, we can appreciate the transition to the written Word which now enshrines the same glorious truth, but with greater detail. Verses 7-9 give six titles of the Word with 6 attributes and 6 effects. The One Who is its Author, Jehovah, occurs 7 times in the second half of the Psalm.

The 6 Titles are, the Law, the Testimony, the Statutes, the Commandment, the Fear, and the Judgments. The Law gives divine instruction as to character and conduct. The Testimony tells of the witness to what God is and what we should be. The Statutes are God's directions to secure obedience. The Commandments speaks of divine decrees which guide us. The Fear tells of the habit of mind which is informed by the Word or Law of God. The Judgments reveal the judicial decisions and sentences of Jehovah.

The 6 Attributes are *perfect*, without flaw or mistake, *sure*, utterly reliable and worthy of trust, *right* or righteous, exhibiting perfect justice, *pure*, like the sun giving light and making things plain, *clean*, that is, it cleanses and removes corruption and guilt, *true*, it is ever faithful and free from deception. These wonderful characteristics of the Word of God should lead us to a deeper appreciation of its worth and the spiritual treasures contained therein.

The 6 Effects of the Word are: It restores or turns the person God-ward, refreshing the inner life. It makes wise the simple, giving practical guidance to the inexperienced. It rejoices the heart or mind, giving satisfying joy, and pleasure to those who believe and

obey it. It enlightens the eyes, illuminating what is dark and puzzling. It endures for ever and is eternal like God Himself.

The Psalmist goes on to declare the true worth or value of the Word and here we get advice which is so greatly needed today. More and more the god of materialism dominates mankind. People are trained from all angles to believe that the chief and only thing that matters is money and material possessions.

Politicians everywhere and the media constantly dangle this lie before the people young and old. They forget the words of One Who declared Himself to be the Truth, and He said “Take heed and beware of all covetousness, *for a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions*” (Luke xii. 15 R.S.V.). Would that this was blazoned from the housetops today. Even if it was, the probability is that few would heed it, so great the enslavement of the human mind to this deception.

David had his priorities right and this should be the concern of all of us today. God’s Word, he declared, was better than all the money and riches that the world can offer, better than much fine gold (Psa. xix. 10). It is sweeter and more satisfying than honey and moreover it warns us concerning things that can only bring unhappiness and sorrow. It not only constrains but restrains, and so brings the reward of peace and contentment to those who obey it. The Psalmist knew some of his own weakness, yet realized his knowledge was partial even regarding his own sins and failings. Who can completely discern all his own errors? he asks, and he proceeds to pray that God would restrain him from presumptuous sins and their domination. Then, he said, I shall be innocent from the great transgression or better, much transgression.

The last words of his prayer are those we can all continually use with real sincerity: “let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer”. The word strength is the word ‘rock’, immoveable, strong and utterly dependable. Redeemer is *gaal*, kinsman-redeemer, the One Who became human and is therefore touched with the feeling of our infirmities and weaknesses and completely understands us (Heb. iv. 15, 16). We can therefore come boldly to Him at all times, knowing that He not only understands us, but, in His great love, can undertake in every circumstance and time of need.

**No.6. Psalms xxii., xxiii., xxiv.
pp. 141 - 146**

These three Psalms form a trilogy. In Psa. xxii. we have a vivid picture of the *Good Shepherd* Who gives His life for the sheep. "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John x. 11). In Psa. xxiii., the *great Shepherd* in resurrection is the One Who provides for and guides the sheep in their earthly pathway. "Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. xiii. 20). And in the 24th Psalm the *chief Shepherd* is portrayed, He Who is coming again in glory to reign and reward the faithful under-shepherds, "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Pet. v. 3 and notice verses 2 and 3).

Psalm xxii.

Psalm xxii. was written by David, but this Scripture goes beyond any experience of David's and relates to his greater Son and Lord (Matt. xxii. 41-45). He Who is the "root and offspring of David" (Rev. xxii. 16). It gives an intense prophetic foreview of the crucifixion of the Saviour. It has been said that the psalmist gives a more vivid description of the sufferings of Christ on the cross than the authors of the gospels. Note the following: verse 1 arrestingly gives us the exact words of His agonizing cry "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46; Mark xv. 34). Verses 7, 8, 13 describe the mockers gathered around the cross and their taunts; the literal piercing of the hands and feet (verse 16); the distorted body and the physical torment (14, 15, 17); the divided garments and the untorn vesture (18). Why was there no mention of the spear thrust? Because the Lord Jesus was already dead when that was done, and the Sufferer could not be represented as telling what happened after He died.

All this was pure prophecy and genuine prediction under the guiding hand of the Spirit of God and moreover was exactly describing crucifixion, a form of punishment unknown in David's day and in the experience of Israel. No wonder the N.T. describes David as a prophet (Acts ii. 29-31). We shall never be able to comprehend the awesome experience of our Saviour at Calvary. The physical side was terrible enough, but infinitely worse and beyond our understanding was the overwhelming moment when God the Father had to turn away His eyes from His beloved Son, when the sin and guilt of His people were 'laid upon Him' and He was made abhorrent, a sin-offering, though He knew no sin Himself (II Cor. v 21). For the first time, that perfect unity between the Father and the Son was broken, wringing from His lips the agonizing cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?". The whole scene, too awful to see or contemplate, was shrouded in thick darkness by God Himself (Matt. xxvii. 45). And if we ask why all this happened to Christ, there is only one answer, it was because of your sins and mine and at what a cost to Him! Who can have a light view of sin when he recognizes this?

At Psa. xxii. 22 a sudden change takes place. Death and suffering is passed and in resurrection we now see the Throne and the universal kingdom of the Lord in all its fulness and glory:

“All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the Lord’s and He is the Governor among the nations” (xxii. 27, 28).

All on earth in that day shall bow down before Him and give Him His rightful place, anticipating that more glorious day when the whole universe including all in heaven and under the earth shall bow the knee and own that Jesus Christ is LORD SUPREME (Philippians ii. 9-11). First the Cross and then the Crown.

The Psalmist ends by extolling the Lord’s righteousness and His mighty power, for “He hath done this” (xxii. 31). *The Companion Bible* points out that these words are the equivalent of “It is finished”. Thus we have the mighty work of redemption accomplished and *finished* by the Lord on the cross, “the sufferings”, and then “the glory to follow”, the purpose of God *finished* when the kingdom is established and Christ is owned as Lord of all.

Psalm xxiii.

This has been called the Pearl of the Psalms and there was a time when most of those who profess to be Christians could recite it from memory. Children in Christian families were taught it in this way, but with the landslide from the truth of God that we see all around us, we doubt very much if this is so today. It has been called the Shepherd Psalm because of verse 1, but it would be a mistake to make this the one theme throughout. In verses 3 and 4 we have the Guide and the traveler, and in verses 5 and 6 the Host and the guest, so that this precious Psalm is portraying the truths of *provision, direction* and *communion* of the child of God. It is all intensely individual. Primarily David was applying it to himself, but surely God’s family of all generations, can join in here, experiencing what the Lord can be to them at all times.

If the first part of verse 1 is true, then the second part most surely follows. If each one of us can appropriate the Lord Jesus for himself by faith, if we all can say as Paul did, “the Son of God Who loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*” (Gal. ii. 20), then all anxiety will vanish and we can rest assured that *we shall never want*. Although the days grow darker and more difficult yet this is still true and will be true for always. The faithful shepherd not only protects his sheep from harm and danger, he guides them into rich pastures, feeds and cares for them so that they are in need of nothing that is essential to their well-being. If only we could always believe this, how much worry and strain would be avoided!

It has been said with truth it is worry that kills, not hard work. Yet both the apostles Paul and Peter show us the antidote, “Casting *all* your care upon Him: for He careth for you” (I Pet. v. 7). “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.). The wonderful thing is that the Lord in His great love, constantly offers to carry our burdens for us. Let us then hand them over to Him and *in no way take them back again*. We surely “shall not want” if we do this and will experience what the Psalmist goes on to say “He makes me to lie down in choice (green) pastures, He leadeth me beside the waters of *rest or peace* (still waters)”.

It follows that these paths are *right* paths (verses 3), the heavenly shepherd can make no mistake. “He led them forth by the *right way*” declares Psa. cvii. 7 and although in Israel’s experience this was sometimes puzzling and testing, yet they proved in the end that God knew what He was doing and His way was best. This is always true for the child of God. Our lives may sometimes appear to be a tangle with much that is baffling. Yet as we get older we can begin to see a pattern that the Lord Himself is weaving as He leads us along His own way. Our great danger is to refuse to walk in those paths and then all the peace and assurance and joy disappear. At the same time, because we are going through the enemy’s territory so to speak, the external may be difficult and dark; the valley of the shadow of death may be gruesome reality, *but He is ever with us* (verse 4). “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”, He has promised (Heb. xiii. 5), so why fear? “Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me”. The eastern shepherd always carried two things, the club (rod) and the crook (staff). The club was for the sheep’s enemies and the crook for help and guidance of the sheep. So the Lord safely and gently leads His people according to His will for each one.

Not only this, but we are so safe with the Lord constantly overshadowing us, that even if surrounded by enemies, we can enjoy a feast without any fear! Moffatt’s translation of verse 5 is suggestive:

“Thou art my Host, spreading a feast for me, while my foes have to look on!”.

What a glorious position and all because we are absolutely safe in His keeping! The psalmist goes on to speak of the soothing anointing oil and overfull ‘cup’ that quenches all thirst and ‘runs over’. Such is the generous giving and provision of the Lord in the pilgrim pathway. There can be only one conclusion:

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever” (Psa. xxiii. 6).

For David, the house of the Lord was the Temple on earth. For the member of the Body the eternal dwelling place for Christ will be the completed Body, then merging into the heavenly Temple or holy of holies in the heavenlies “far above all” which God is now preparing as His home for ever (Eph. ii. 20-22).

It is noteworthy in Psa. xxiii., short though it is, that a number of the compound Jehovah titles are illustrated. These wonderful titles of God add another word by way of attribute to the great name of Jehovah. *Jehovah-Rohi* is the Lord my shepherd. *Jehovah-Jireh* (Gen. xxii. 14) is seen providing my needs (verse 1). *Jehovah-Shalom*, Jehovah my peace (Judg. vi. 24) leads beside the still (peaceful) waters. *Jehovah-Ropheka*, the Lord that heals (Exod. xv. 26) restores my soul. *Jehovah-Shammah*, the Lord is there

(Ezek. xlviii. 35) is with me even in the valley of the shadow. *Jehovah-Nissi*, the Lord is my protection (Exodus xvii. 15) guards me even in the presence of my enemies. *Jehovah-Mekkadishkem*, the Lord that anoints and sanctifies (Exod. xxxi. 13) does so with the oil of gladness. He is the One Who leads me in paths of righteousness because He is *Jehovah-Tsidkenu*, the Lord my righteousness (Jer. xxiii. 6; xxxiii. 16).

What more can one say? This is the great God Who gives us rest, refreshment, restoration, guidance, companionship, comfort, sustenance and abounding joy. Truly we can say with gratitude “my cup runneth over”. By these great truths multitudes have lived and died, and every one of these truths is treasured up in the Lord Jesus Christ and if we have Him, we have everything! Surely Christ is ALL (Col. iii. 11).

Psalm xxiv.

If Psa. xxii. can be summarized by the word CROSS, and Psa. xxiii. by CROOK, Psa. xxiv. is summed up in the word CROWN, for here we look into the future with the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth in power and great glory, when the Lord Jesus shall return in triumph, binding the deceiver Satan and taking complete control of this world’s affairs. Men forget that the earth and all its content belong to the One Who created it, namely Jehovah. Today men act as if they owned the earth. Arab and Jew wrestle over Palestine, but God said “the land is *Mine*” (Lev. xxv. 23) and He gives it to whomsoever He wills to have it.

When Psa. xxiv. becomes reality in the millennial age mankind will be brought to the point when at last they recognize this. Ezekiel’s glorious temple (Ezek. xl. 2; Isa. ii. 2), yet to be built we believe, near Jerusalem, will be the divine centre from which light and blessing will radiate over the whole earth. Micah iv. 1-4 describes this time when the nations will long to know God (so different from the present time) and will journey to this house of God upon its high mountain, to learn His ways and His truth which will “go forth of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Micah iv. 2). But they will have to learn the truth of Psa. xxiv. 3, 5:

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from God”.

It never has been a light thing to approach a holy God. The Psalm concludes with a wonderful anthem of praise concerning the Lord Jesus, the King of glory, entering this Temple. It is sung antiphonally, one choir asks the question and the other answers it:

“Lift up your heads O ye gates; and
be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors;
and the King of glory shall come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory” (xxiv. 9 and 10).

**No.7. Psalms xxxvii. and xlvi.
pp. 161 - 166**

Psalm xxxvii.

Psalm xxxvii. is a precious Psalm containing much truth which is for all time. This is an acrostic Psalm of which there are nine in the original text. Some are complete and some are not, using only a portion of the Hebrew alphabet. In the case of Psa. xxxvii., we have a perfect acrostic. This device was probably used as an aid to memory, for doubtless many psalms were memorized and treasured in the mind. In the first nine verses we have a series of words advising us in our daily walk. *Fret not* (verses 7 and 8), *trust* (3), *delight* (4), *commit* (5), *rest* (7), and *wait patiently* (7).

The problem in the first verse is echoed in Psa. xlix. and lxxiii. dealing with the prosperity of the wicked. It is often difficult to understand why ungodly and unbelieving persons get on so well in this life with the minimum of trouble, while the believer seems to be compassed with problems and difficulties. But it is the *end* that shows up the utter difference between the two classes. The end of the wicked is destruction; the end of the righteous is peace and eternal security. At that time, what has happened in this life is irrelevant. With this in mind, there is no need whatsoever to be envious of the workers of iniquity (Psa. xxxvii. 1). Their prosperity is so short lived compared with eternity. "They shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb" (verse 2). The positive antidote to all this is to trust in the Lord (3). The word "fret" literally means to be warmed. How easy it is to get "hot and bothered" rather than to experience "the peace of God that passes understanding".

The writer, who was David, goes further, and reminds us not only of the need to fully trust the Lord, but to delight ourselves in Him (verse 4) and so for Him to be the ground of lasting pleasure. It may be that many place their faith in the Lord, but how few seem to exhibit real joy and pleasure in Him and all His fulness! Too often the believer's pleasures are found only in earthly things which perish with the using. The delight which is in the Lord will result in our desires being granted by Him (4). Now of course this does not mean that we can ask the Lord for anything we choose, for some of these things may be against His will for us. But if our minds find their supreme delight *in Him*, shall we, in this frame of mind, ask for things which are contrary to His Word? Surely not.

The fifth verse enjoins us to commit our way unto the Lord. The word translated commit means 'to rest upon'. Moffatt's version here is suggestive:

"Leave all to Him. Rely on Him and He will see to it."

One thing is absolutely certain, the believer's way, left in the Lord's hands, is absolutely safe and sure.

In verse 6 judgment means vindication. This is true in many places in the O.T., specially in those prophecies looking forward to Messiah's reign on earth. Then judgment, or better justice, will rule. This is what man has been striving to obtain for centuries and been defeated owing to his own sinful and failing nature. God's rule will be absolutely fair and just, for the first time in the world's experience since the Fall. Once again we quote Moffatt:

"He will bring your innocence to light, and make the justice of your cause clear as noonday."

Verse 7 bids us to *rest* in the Lord and to *wait patiently for Him*. To rest in the Lord is to roll all our burdens on Him, knowing that He has offered to carry them for us and then to wait in patience for Him to move and lead. This is easier said than done, for most of us can wait *impatiently* and chafe all the while, but this merely brings tension and unhappiness, leading once more to 'fretting'. Neither should we be unduly upset by the deeds of those who bring 'wicked devices to pass'. It is only "a little while and the wicked shall not be" (verse 10). Not only this, he has finally to face God. "The Lord shall laugh at him; for He seeth that His judgment (day) is coming" (13). God is represented as 'laughing' by means of *anthropomorphism*, or to use a shorter word, by the figure of *condescension*. In the use of this figure many parts of the body are ascribed to the Lord, such as eyes, ears, mouth, arms, hands, etc., but we know that God, as spirit, has no external dimensions like this. He has something corresponding to these members but this is really the Lord in His graciousness, stooping down to our level and using "baby language", so that we can receive some understanding of His infinitely great and limitless nature.

It is significant that God is represented as laughing only three times in the Bible (Psalms ii. 4; xxxvii. 13; lix. 8) and in each occurrence it is not the laugh of joy, but the *laugh of derision* in connection with His enemies. When we come to the N.T. we find there is no record of the Lord Jesus smiling or laughing, but we must not make wrong deductions from this. One can hardly believe that He remained perpetually stern and long-faced to those whom He loved, but for some wise reason, this has not been recorded, and if it had been it would probably have been misunderstood or misrepresented.

What a contrast we have between the end of the wicked and the righteous:

"For evil doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth" (Psa. xxxvii. 9)

This is repeated four more times in this Psalm, in verses 11, 22, 29 and 34. In the last two occurrences "land" is substituted for "earth" in the A.V. but it is the same word being used. Its primary reference is to the earthly inheritance that God promised unconditionally to Israel and we find the Lord using the same words in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 5) "the meek shall inherit the earth". Here the Lord is not revealing something new, but bringing forward the divine promises contained in Psa. xxxvii.

An indiscriminating orthodoxy has one place only for the redeemed in the next life, and that is heaven. But this grossly over simplifies and whittles down the greatness of

God's purpose of the ages which embraces earth as well as the highest heavens. The whole creation will be the eternal destiny of God's redeemed children as He has willed and appointed for them, which fact is clearly revealed in the Scriptures. This being so, no one who wants real understanding of the Word of God is going to confuse earth with heaven and stress one at the expense of the other.

The Body of Christ is eternally linked with its associated Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the heavenlies, "far above all" and even now is seen by God as seated with Him there (Eph. ii. 6). Other members of the Lord's redeemed children will find their place on earth and finally in the new earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. iii. 13) which will be a glorious inheritance. We need minds enlarged and freed from tradition in order to appreciate this. The Psalm ends with the assured position of the righteous in contrast to the wicked and this is because the believer is in the secure hands of the Lord Who will never leave or forsake those who trust in Him.

Psalm xlvi.

We pass on to this Psalm which has been a comfort in trouble to so many all down the centuries:

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear" (Psa. xlvi. 1 and 2).

The Psalm is linked with the next two, *xlvi.* & *xlvii.*, and they form a trilogy. They could well refer to Israel's deliverance from Sennacherib and God's defence of His people from this bitter enemy. If so, their author was probably Hezekiah.

This hymn of praise opens with the complete safety of the people of God in spite of all difficulties, human and otherwise. The river of verse 4 primarily refers to the conduit built by Hezekiah which brought the water from Gihon to a new pool he had made for the purpose (II Kings xx. 20), thus ensuring the water supply for the city in times of difficulty and war.

There is another way of looking at this Psalm and that is to regard it from a prophetic standpoint. Many of the Psalms are intensely prophetic, looking forward not only to the first coming of the Lord Jesus, but also the second coming to the earth to rule and reign. The 47th and 48th Psalms back this up, for they are a wonderful looking forward to the time when God's rule will be established and recognized all over the earth (Psa. *xlvi.* 2, 7, 8, 9) and Jerusalem (Zion) will be its chief city.

Psalm *xlvi.* could well be the hymn of praise that Israel will sing after the Lord's second coming when He rescues them at the end of the Great Tribulation, from the united world forces, bent on Israel's final destruction. It will indeed be a time of "Jacob's trouble", the worst and most dangerous that they have ever had to face, but the nation will be rescued out of it (Jer. xxx. 7, 8) by the returning Christ in power and great glory.

The recurring phrase “The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge” will then be sung by them with real feeling. The nations will assuredly rage (xlvi. 6) against the Lord and His anointed (Psa. ii. 1-3), but God will speak in judgment and the earth’s opposing forces will be routed and destroyed. The terrible destruction in the earth after the judgments described in the book of the Revelation are referred to in verse 8:

“Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth.”

The attainment of real peace when the Prince of peace returns is a wonderful feature of the earthly kingdom of the Lord. Micah iv. 3 declares:

“He (Christ) shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

It is quite obvious that this must refer to the future, for war and slaughter have characterized history since the Fall of man. If lasting peace is going to be a reality, then God must deal with the armaments problem and our Psalms assures us:

“He maketh wars to cease *unto the end of the earth*; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire” (xlvi. 9).

The bow, spear and war chariots are weapons of war and the psalmist declares that the Lord will abolish them. How He will do it is beyond our understanding at the moment. Just imagine a world where the appalling burden and colossal danger of armaments is lifted for ever! No wonder everyone is exhorted to be quiet and recognize God as the One Who will be exalted among the nations (heathen) and all over the earth (xlvi. 10).

Surely then saved and restored Israel will be able to say:

“The Lord of hosts (Jehovah Sabaoth) is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge” (xlvi. 7 and 11).

We can join in here and now with the last verse of the third Psalm in this trilogy:

“This God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death” (Psalm xlviii. 14).

No.8. Psalms I. and lxxxix.
pp. 181 - 185

Psalm I.

This Psalm opens with God in all His majesty—*El, Elohim, Jehovah*, the God of gods, even Jehovah. He is presented as the *almighty* One, the *awe-inspiring* and *covenant* God. It is the only Psalm of Asaph in this second Book, the others occurring in Book three.

There is an introduction (verses 1-6), a conclusion (verses 22 and 23). In between we find two divisions, first of all rebuking formalism (7-15) and the other rebuking hypocrisy and unfaithfulness in His people Israel (16-21).

This Psalm could apply to Israel many times during their history, but we believe it goes further than this and can be regarded as a prophecy of the end time which comes to its climax with the Second Advent of Christ in power and great glory.

It will be to the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem that the Lord Jesus will return (Zechariah xiv. 1-4):

“Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence” (Psa. I. 2, 3).

He comes first of all to save and judge His earthly people Israel and then to judge the world that has rejected Him.

“He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is Judge Himself. Selah” (I. 4-6).

In His revelation of the tremendous events of the end of this age culminating in His coming the second time to this earth; the Lord Jesus said:

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days (see verses 21 and 22) shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth (or land) mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (that is, dispersed Israel all over the earth)” (Matt. xxiv. 29-31).

Many are the Scriptures which foretell this great re-gathering of Israel to the land that God promised unconditionally and permanently to Abraham and his posterity (Genesis xiii. 14-17; xv. 18; xvii. 7, 8).

If this never comes to pass, God will have broken His Word, and if He can do this with His earthly people how do we know that He will not do so with us who are members of the Body of Christ? We are assured that the “gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (i.e. change of mind on His part, Rom. xi. 25-29). Truly His covenant “will He not break nor alter the thing that has gone out of His lips” (Psa. lxxxix. 34-37).

Consequently the returning Lord and Judge sends out His command as we have seen in verse 5. In the eleventh chapter, Isaiah declares:

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again *the second time* to recover the remnant of His people and He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and *shall assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth*” (Isa. xi. 11, 12).

This, and many other passages in the Word of God assure us that the true Israel, descended from Isaac, will at last enjoy the earthly inheritance that God has promised them. Now is the time of God’s silence in grace which has characterized this present age. When He speaks again, it will surely be in judgment as the book of Revelation clearly teaches, but His scrutiny is first given to the people of Israel:

“Hear, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against thee, I am God, even thy God” (l. 7).

Nothing can alter the fact that added light and knowledge bring added responsibility. Later on Amos brings this home to the same people, showing that guilt is in proportion to privilege:

“You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amos iii. 2).

The wicked made the fatal mistake of thinking that God was like themselves (l. 21). This was because He did not summarily punish them. They misinterpreted His longsuffering silence as apathy and indifference. Doubtless there are multitudes today who make the same mistake. Evil abounds everywhere and nothing appears to happen. God apparently does not take any notice, but verse 22 contains a terrible warning showing that God does know and care and one day sin will be judged by Him Who is the Judge of all the earth.

“Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.”

The whole Psalm is a warning against religious formalism which was stressed so much by the later prophets.

Psalm lxxxix.

This great Psalm brings before us the *faithfulness* of God. The word occurs seven times, in verses 1, 2, 5, 8, 24, 33, 49. In the last verse the word rendered ‘truth’ is the same as the other occurrences translated ‘faithfulness’ as the R.V. shows. One of the

greatest characteristics of our great God is that He is utterly faithful to His word. It is upon this that all hope depends. If God promises and does not perform, but breaks His word, then we are of all men the most miserable. It is because of the unchangeability of that Word that the nation of Israel has a future which this Psalm makes so clear. This is true of course of the Body of Christ and the whole redemptive plan of God. No wonder we are all called to be faithful in response to such a God Who changeth not.

The Psalm consists of an introduction (verse 1-4) and three main sections dealing with hope (5-18), promise (19-37) and trouble (38-51), and ends with praise and a double Amen, thus concluding the third book of the Psalter. Not only do we have faithfulness occurring 7 times but also the word mercy or loving kindness (1, 2, 14, 28, 33, 49). The Psalmist commences with song, resulting from his personal experience of this God of faithfulness and grace, Who had dealt so wondrously with David in making His unconditional covenant concerning his throne and its perpetuity.

The majesty of God is now stressed. He is incomparable among the angels of heaven. The “sons of the mighty” bow down before Him (6 and 7). On earth below He is incomparable in nature (9) and in history (10). He broke the power of Egypt (Rahab) and the whole creation of heaven and earth are His (11-13). His people are those who “know the joyful sound” (15) possibly the jubilee trumpet which heralded deliverance from debt and bondage.

The second section (19-37) deals with *promise*, specially that related to the Davidic Covenant concerning David’s *seed* and his *throne*. II Sam. vii. should be read here, for this section cannot be properly understood without it. Verses 19-28 deal with God’s promises to David personally and then his seed in verses 29-37. This purpose of God cannot be frustrated or annulled, even though the seed fails, whether it is Solomon (II.Sam.vii.12-15) or Israel (Psa. lxxxix. 29-33). They may profane God’s statutes (lxxxix. 31 margin) yet God will not profane His covenant (34, break = profane).

Three outstanding unconditional covenants of God relate to Israel and God’s purpose for them and world blessing cannot be appreciated or understood unless the covenants are born in mind. To Abraham, Isaac and Jacob God promised a perpetual seed and a land from the Nile to the Euphrates (Gen. xiii. 14-17; xv. 17, 18). To David the Lord repeats His promise concerning the seed and adds the *throne*. In the final fulfillment, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the true seed of David, will surely bring all this to pass, but we must not make the mistake that some do, specially those of amillennial persuasion, that all these promises relate *solely* to Christ, for sometimes the word ‘seed’ is used in the plural and must refer to Abraham’s posterity (see Gen. xvii. 4-8 and note verse 7). There are too many verses declaring God’s intention of preserving the people of Israel for ever for them to finally fail or be wiped out.

True it is that if everything depended upon them, then this great purpose would founder, but it rather depends on the Lord’s new covenant of grace with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jer. xxxi.) which rests upon the shed blood of the Lord Jesus on Calvary’s cross.

How good it is to realize and believe that:

“. . . . My loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break (profane), *nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips*. Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure *for ever* and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established *for ever* as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah” (Psa. lxxxix. 33-37).

Note carefully what is said. God will not break this covenant of grace with David *or alter it in any way*. So important is this that the God of truth takes an *oath* on it. There are expositors who wish to get rid of the literal Israel and apply all the promises of God to the church in which case God *would have altered* what He has here stated. We have the N.T. assurance that the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance (i.e. change of mind on His part, Rom. xi. 29). These facts make havoc of those ideas of the spiritualizers who often do so much damage to the interpretation of the Word of God.

The last section of the Psalm possibly refers to Jehoiachin as the king in verses 43-45. This youth was only 18 years of age when he came to the throne (II Kings xxiv. 8) and he reigned only 3 months and 10 days. The rest of his life was spent in exile in which he was literally ‘clothed with dishonour’ (45). The Psalm closes with a plea that the writer soon might see the loving kindness of the Lord carried into effect, for life was so brief (47, 48) and that God would remember the insult (reproach) of the enemies. The last verse (52) is not part of the Psalm, but was evidently added by the editor to close the third book of the Psalter. How good it is to realize afresh that the unchangeable God of the O.T. (Mal. iii. 6) is the Lord Jesus of the N.T. Who is “the same yesterday and today and for ever” (Heb. xiii. 8). His eternal love never varies towards us and will be brought to fruition when we are presented in resurrection “holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight” (Col. i. 22).

**No.9. Psalms ciii., cvii., cxix., cxxxiii., cl.
pp. 201 – 207**

Psalm ciii.

In Eph. v. 18, 19 we are exhorted to be filled by the Spirit, speaking in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our heart to the Lord. In Psalm ciii. we have one that we can use regularly to the Lord's praise. It is divided into three parts: Personal (verses 1-5); National (6-18) and Universal (19-22). There are 22 verses, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet and the great covenant name of Jehovah occurs 10 times.

First of all we are called to "bless the Lord" for his wondrous goodness and matchless benefits which we are so apt to forget (1, 2). These are expressed in forgiveness, healing, redemption, crowning, satisfaction and renewal. Dr. Alexander Whyte used to say that in these verses we have the Law Court—*forgiveth all thine iniquities*; the Hospital—*healeth all thy diseases*; the Slave Market—*redeemeth thy life from destruction*; the Throne Room—*crowneeth thee with loving kindness*; and the Banquet Hall—*satisfieth thy mouth with good things*! God's infinite graciousness is portrayed in the following verses, His slowness to chide and His swiftness to bless. His mercy is unmeasurable as the height from earth to heaven (11) or its breadth from east to west (12). Our sins are forever gone. They have been blotted out because they have been borne by the Redeemer Himself. No wonder the Psalmist says "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting" (17) and who can measure this?

As the Psalm comes to its end there is a crescendo of praise from the whole creation in heaven and earth. The myriads of angels and heavenly beings join in the chorus and so a mighty paeon ascends to our great God and Saviour Who alone is worthy to receive it.

"Bless the Lord (Jehovah), all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the Lord (Jehovah), O my soul."

Psalm cvii.

This wonderful Psalm belongs to a group of three, namely cv., cvi., cvii. If we add the testimony of Psa. civ., then we have a summary of the O.T. for this Psalm gives the narrative of creation, Psa. cv. the Patriarchal history, Psa. cvi. the story of Israel in the land of promise to the Babylonian Captivity, and Psa. cvii. the return of the exiles from Babylon.

Psalm cvii. has an introduction (1-3) and a conclusion (43) and in between two sections, verses 4-32 and 33-42. In the introduction Israel are called upon to give thanks to the Lord for His delivering mercies from exile (2-7). It is not enough for them to *feel* grateful. They must *say so* and give an external acknowledgment of their gratitude. This

is a lesson to all of us. How easy it is for us to forget all the Lord's benefits (ciii. 2)! A constant praising heart is a great antidote to ingratitude and spiritual declension. As we look back into the past, we can truly say of the Lord's leading that it has always been the *right way* (7), though sometimes not of our choosing.

It has been difficult and perplexing at times, as it was with Israel, but the afterward has always vindicated the Lord's dealing with us, if we obtain the right viewpoint. The Lord led Israel to *Marah*, the bitter place, before *Elim* the place of plenty. But this was to test them to see how far they would trust Him:

“. . . . thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these 40 years in the wilderness, *to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart*, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger that He might make thee know that *man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live*" (Deut. viii. 2, 3).

In verses 4-32 the Psalmist presents the Lord as the great deliverer in times of trouble, and as a Guide, as we have seen (verse 7). Then as captives, His people need a Rescuer (10-16). Those with bodily affliction need a Physician (17-22), and storm-tossed seamen need someone who can still the tempest (23-32). After each of these sections comes the refrain, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" (15, 21, 31). To such a God we should "sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving and declare His works with rejoicing" (22) and this reminds us of Heb. xiii. 15.

The theme now changes to the providential goodness of the Lord in the world. Israel's blessings were earthly, but none the less precious because of this. When they walked closely with their God He showed His approval by blessing their land and their possessions (35-38). The reverse happened when they indulged in backsliding (39). The conclusion of the Psalm calls His people to be wise and observe these things which reveal the great loving kindness and patience of the Lord in His practical training and guidance of His redeemed people.

Psalm cxix.

We feel we must go back to Psalm cxix. It is most significant that this Psalm, the longest one, has one subject namely the Word of God. This is referred to in ten different ways, the number corresponding to the Ten Commandments of Exodus. They are as follows: (1) Way, *derek*. (2) Testimonies, *eduth*. (3) Precepts, *pikkudim*. (4) Commandments, *mizvah*. (5) Word (*Saying*), *imrah*. (6) Law, *torah*. (7) Judgment, *mishpat*. (8) Righteousness, *zedek*. (9) Statute, *hok* and *hukka* (from *hakak*, to hew). (10) Word, *dabar*. Out of the 176 verses of the Psalm these words occur in 173 of them. It should be noted that 'judgment' in verse 84 is not a *designation* of the Law, but a sentence that will be carried out in keeping with it and "faithfulness" in verse 90 is an *attribute* of the Law rather than a name for it.

The Psalm is an acrostic, and, as we have seen, there are eight others, some of which do not use all the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. There are also two examples of the acrostic device outside the psalter, Prov. xxxi. 10-31 and the book of Lamentations. Psa. cxix. is complete, and eight verses are given to each of these 22 letters and each of the eight verses begins with its respective letter. These are noted in the A.V. translation and to show how the Psalms would look if our English alphabet were similarly used, we quote from the compilers of *The Psalms Chronologically Arranged* taking the letter D as an example:

- 25: Depressed to the dust is my soul
 Quicken Thou me according to Thy Word
- 26: Declared have I (to Thee) my ways and Thou heardest me
 Teach me Thy Statutes
- 27: Declare Thou to me the way of Thy precepts
 So shall I talk of Thy wondrous works
- 28: Dropping is my soul for heaviness
 Strengthen Thou me according to Thy Word
- 29: Deceitful ways remove from me
 And grant me Thy law graciously
- 30: Determined have I upon the way of Truth;
 Thy judgments have I laid before me
- 31: Deliberately have I stuck unto Thy testimonies
 O Lord, put me not to shame
- 32: Day by Day I will run the way of Thy commandments
 When Thou shalt enlarge my heart.

When the whole of this marvelous Psalm is read, one cannot help noticing the extreme importance of the Word of God to the Psalmist, who may have been Hezekiah or Ezra. It was more to him than wealth, “the law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of (piles of, Moffat) gold and silver” (72). It was better than sleep, “I am up before the dawn to pray, waiting for Thy promises. I waken through the night to muse upon Thy Word” (147, 148 Moffatt). The writer knew that the divine understanding he longed for was only obtainable from God’s Word. “Through Thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way” (104). “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (105). “The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the sincere (simple A.V.)” (130). To read the Word of God was no chore; it was a perpetual delight. “O how love I Thy law! It is my mediation all the day” (97). And he was convinced of its truth, “Thy Word is true from the beginning, and every one of Thy righteous judgments endureth for ever” (160).

It is obvious that such an one was walking closely with the Lord. Our spiritual health can be rightly judged by our assessment of the Word of God and where we place it in our lives. Can we truthfully say that it is first and foremost, as the Psalmist was able to do? If not, we should think seriously and definitely do something about it, for to be in a cold attitude of mind towards the holy Scriptures is to be in a dangerous condition indeed.

Psalm cxxxiii.

This little Psalm is precious because it stresses the important truth of *unity*. This is a popular word at the moment in Christendom and many who use it seem oblivious of the fact that *external* unity (and this is what they usually mean) is impossible without *internal* and *spiritual* unity on the basis of the inspired Scriptures and the fundamentals contained therein upon which true Christianity rests. In spite of all that is being said about ecumenicalism, the tragic fact remains that there is no agreement on these basic truths in the various denominations. To deny, or not wholeheartedly support the full inspiration of the Word of God, the deity of Christ, His atoning sacrifice of Himself for our sins, His physical resurrection and His redeeming grace and power is to forfeit the right to be regarded as **true Christian**. It is all very well to quote John xvii. 21 “that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us”, but these words primarily relate to the eleven disciples and their future witness together in the period covered by the Acts and to those who were saved by grace through their ministry “those who shall believe on Me *through their word*” (xvii. 18-20). The divided state of present Christendom fortunately did not exist at this time. “The welding together into some sort of unity of the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Anglican Church and the Nonconformist Churches would be a universal calamity, for it could be done only by making sacrifices which would be a betrayal of Christ.” These words of Dr. Graham Scroggie hit the nail on the head. One would think, judging from much contemporary religious literature, that the only thing God was concerned about today is *external* unity.

The fact is that external unity can only be realized when first of all one recognizes the spiritual unity that *God has already made*. Israel’s unity became a reality as they recognized the great Torah, the law of God. It was this that bound them all together. In Eph. iv., members of the Body of Christ are exhorted to keep or guard the *unity of the spirit* in the bond of peace (iv. 3). Note they are not asked to create a unity themselves but to guard one that already existed as a reality through the work of the Holy Spirit. All other unities are deceptive and useless. The sacred Scriptures warn us that at the end of this age there will be a world federation of nations, a false unity activated and ruled by Satan through the Antichrist and with this there will be a *world religion* which will give Satan the deceiver what he has been scheming for, ever since his fall—namely world worship (Matt. iv. 8, 9; Rev. xiii. 3, 4, 11, 12).

In dealing with the conditions of the world just prior to the Second Advent, the Lord Jesus gives a fourfold warning of *deception* (Matt. xxiv. 4, 5, 11, 24; II Thess. ii. 8-10; Rev. xiii. 12-14). There is only one way of escaping this, and that is to cling fast to the Word of God and “to rightly divide” it (II Tim. ii. 15). One must be prepared to be called narrow minded, devious, and other epithets, but we seek to follow One Who described Himself as the Truth (John xiv. 6), yet was called worse things than these. He indeed was “despised and rejected of men” (Isa. liii. 3), therefore we must not expect popularity in the world that knows Him not. To be acclaimed in the resurrection day as *faithful* by Him will be the only thing that then really matters. Let us seek a deeper understanding of

what the unity of the Spirit really means and then obey God's command to guard it. In doing it we shall be preserved from false unities that are merely external and deceptive.

Psalm cl.

The last Psalm (cl.) is a twelve-fold paeon of praise to the Lord and on what better note can the Psalms end? As long as we are consciously in a praising frame of mind we are unlikely to go wrong. If we can only remember constantly the exceeding riches of grace and glory which are ours in Christ by faith, the effect will be a very practical one. We shall say with the psalmist "what shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?" (Psa. cxvi. 12). We shall be constrained to place ourselves and all we have at His disposal and sing with Frances Ridley Havergal:

"O use me, Lord, use even me,
Just as Thou wilt, and when, and where,
Until Thy blessed face I see,
Thy rest, Thy joy, Thy glory share."

Something like this must have affected the psalmist when he wrote Psa. cl. He calls for every living creature in heaven and earth, assisted by a mighty orchestra, to praise Jehovah, the covenant keeping God of love, grace and mercy.

This is the grand finale of this wonderful five-fold Book of praise:

"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Allelujah!" (Psa. cl. 6).
"And every creature which is in heaven, and in the earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. v. 13).

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

No.1. pp. 1 - 6

There is no doubt whatsoever that a knowledge of what the holy Scriptures teach concerning the Holy Spirit is of supreme importance. The need to get a Bible-based view of the Holy Spirit becomes more and more evident as various charismatic movements appear on the scene. The study is indeed profound as any consideration of the great eternal God must be. The Unitarian, who denies the deity of Christ, has the same problem regarding the Holy Spirit. His personality is denied and He is relegated to being merely a divine influence or a manifestation of divine power. Judged by the Scriptures, this view is completely defective and must be rejected by all who value and want to attain to the knowledge of God's truth.

We make no attempt in this work to deal with the Trinity. This has been done in other studies. We would re-iterate that while the word 'trinity' does not occur in the Bible, yet the *fact* of it does. Owing to the way the 'person' is used today, usually being synonymous with an individual, separate from all other individuals, this word is better avoided as far as possible in dealing with the Godhead, though it is very difficult not to use it, as we have no satisfactory English word as an alternative.

As Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas wisely remarks,

“instead of meaning the fact of separate individuality, personality in God is intended to convey an idea of inner distinction which exists in the unity of the divine Nature. The facts from Scripture demand from us an acknowledgment of the *unity* of the Godhead and at the same time those interior distinctions between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which we can only express by our word 'person'. While therefore, it is true that the term is used today in connection with human life in a way that is quite different from its use in connection with the Godhead, it is also true that no other term has yet been found adequate to express the essential distinctions in the Godhead” (*The Principles of Theology*, p.95).

Let us consider the following passages of Scripture:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. xxviii. 19).

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen” (II Cor. xiii. 14).

It should be obvious that both Matthew and the Apostle Paul place the same emphasis on the Holy Spirit as they do on the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It would be quite improper, irreverent and misleading to associate the Holy Spirit in this way with the Godhead unless He was equal with the Father and the Son.

Moreover, in connection with the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, Peter accuses them of lying to the Holy Ghost (Acts v. 3), lying to God (verse 4), and tempting the Spirit of the Lord (verse 9). It is obvious from this that Peter considered the Holy Spirit to be God

and not just a power or an influence. It is impossible to lie to a *force*. Furthermore, Paul, in Eph. iv. 30 exhorts members of the Body not to “grieve the Spirit of God whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption”. Again, it is quite impossible to grieve *power*. We live in an age of power, which has come to the fore today as it has never done in times past. Yet no one in their senses would think it possible to grieve, let us say, atomic power, tremendous though this may be. One can only grieve a moral being. When one considers this and the whole revelation of the Bible concerning the Holy Spirit, there should be no doubt whatever that He is a manifestation of the one God Who declares that there is ‘none else’ beside Him (Isa. xlii. 8; xliii. 10; xliv. 6; xlv. 18, 21). Anything less than this is, as we have before said, utterly defective and is therefore misleading and dangerous.

The deity of the Holy Spirit may raise problems in our minds, but the first thing we must always do, if we want nothing but truth, is *to believe what God says in His Word*, even if we do not understand it. Anything less than this dishonours Him and exhibits an heart of unbelief which comes under His condemnation. If we are only going to believe what we can understand, our creed will be a small one indeed and moreover we are then open to the deception of the enemy; because our loins are not girded about by truth (Ephesians vi. 14).

The closeness of the relationship between the three manifestations of the triune God is seen by how one honours the other.

(1) *The Father honours the Son.* “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, *even as* they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him” (John v. 22, 23).

(2) *The Son honours the Father.* “Then answered the Jews, and said unto Him, Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour My Father, and ye dishonour Me” (John viii. 48, 49).

(3) *The Spirit honours the Son.* “But when the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me” (John xv. 26). “He (the Spirit of truth) shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you” (John xvi. 14). It is this one God, Who has found it necessary to manifest Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit for our salvation and the completion of His redemptive purpose for heaven and earth, that we worship and serve.

Titles of the Holy Spirit.

There are various titles of the Holy Spirit:

The Spirit of God.

“And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen. i. 2).

The Spirit of the Lord.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me” (Isa. lxi. 1; Luke iv. 18; Acts v. 9).

The Spirit of our God.

“ ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (I Cor. vi. 11).

The Spirit of grace.

Those who have “trodden under foot the Son of God and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace” (Heb. x. 29).

The Spirit of truth.

“He (the Father) shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth” (John xvi. 16, 17).

The Comforter.

John xiv. 16, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7 *parakletos*, comforter, helper. Note that the Lord says “another Comforter”, for He Himself was a comforter.

In I John ii. 1 *parakletos* is rendered ‘Advocate’. The English word is derived from the Latin *Advocatus* and both words mean one called to the side of another for help or counsel. *The Companion Bible* points out that the Rabbinical writings often refer to the Messiah as *M-nahem* (Comforter) and speak of His days as the days of consolation. In the context we see that the Lord with His love and care for the disciples could see their continued need of a comforter and helper, so in view of His imminent departure, He provides another One, the Holy Spirit, Who would abide with them continually.

In connection with the momentous event of the resurrection of Christ, which is the basis of Christianity, we find the whole Godhead engaged. In John x. 17, 18 we have the astounding assertion by the Lord Jesus that He could and would not only lay down His life when He chose to do so, but also take it again:

“No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down for Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again”.

He likewise said “destroy this temple (His body), and in three days I will raise it up” (John ii. 19). Obviously, these words could never have been made by mortal man or by any created being. They are another proof that He combined (mysteriously and seemingly impossibly to us) humanity and deity. No wonder Paul says “great is the secret of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh” (I Tim. iii. 16), God took upon Himself a human body. Then in Gal. i. 1 we have the statement that Christ was raised by the Father, and in I Pet. iii. 18:

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, *but quickened (made alive) by the Spirit*”.

So we can say with truth that Father, Son and Holy Spirit combine to conquer death in the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, and we hear His thrilling words in Rev. i. 18:

“I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, *I am alive for evermore*”, and as He said to His disciples, “Because I live, ye shall live also”.

In I Cor. ii. 9-11 we read:

“. . . . Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by *His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God . . . even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*”

The Holy Spirit, being God, can plumb the depths of God, and He is the only One Who can. What created being can search and discover God to perfection in all His fullness? What a mighty aid then we have in the person of the Holy Spirit the great Revealer of truth, so that “we might know the things that are freely given to us by God” (I Cor. ii. 12). All this has been conveyed to us through the holy Scriptures which are “words which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (verse 13). The Apostle asserts that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually* discerned” (verse 14). Unaided man cannot get to know the things of God.

In other words we, as believers, are shut up to the revealing power of the Holy Spirit working upon the holy Scriptures, and it is by this alone that we receive a knowledge of the truth lying behind the words contained in the Word of God, as we humbly read and seek divine illumination and understanding. Like the Psalmist of old we must continually pray:

“Open Thou mine eyes, the I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law” (Psa. cxix. 18).

Let us get this quite clear. Divine enlightenment cannot come from theological courses or by any special methods of study by themselves. It can only come from the Holy Spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. i. 13-19), the great Revealer of the truth He Himself has caused to be written.

No.2. pp. 21 - 25

The Work of the Holy Spirit.

The creative work of Genesis i.

While creation is always linked with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Scriptures (John i. 3; Col. i. 13-17), yet His work was combined with that of the Holy Spirit:

“And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen. i. 2).

Just as we have this in connection with the *material* creation, so it is with reference to the *spiritual* creation, as we shall see later on in this study.

The inspiration of the holy Scriptures.

Peter, in his second epistle, asserts:

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. 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” (II Pet. i. 20, 21).

This statement as to the origin of the Word of God is obviously complementary to that of the Apostle Paul in II Tim. iii. 16, 17 and it is noteworthy that both Peter and Paul, at the end of their lives, stress the divine authorship of the sacred Scriptures which are the sole basis for a knowledge of the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Revealer of Truth.

Not only is the Holy Spirit the inspirer and author of God’s Word, He is the only one Who can give illumination and understanding of its divine contents. In our last study we note how Paul stresses the fact that man without the aid of the Holy Spirit, is unable to receive and comprehend what God has caused to be written. “The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” that by His enlightenment “we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (I Cor. ii. 11, 12), for “God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit” (verse 10), and these words are described as “words which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (verse 13). The Lord Jesus promised the disciples that the Holy Spirit would ‘guide them into all truth’. “He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and *shall show it unto you*” (John xvi. 13, 14).

Here is something then which is absolutely vital, something which neither intellectual ability nor theological training can give by themselves, namely divine understanding of the Bible.

The witness of the Holy Spirit.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. viii. 16). In this work the Holy Spirit makes real to the believer what has been taken by faith and gives the consciousness of that reality. It is with this in mind that the Apostle John says “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself” (I John v. 10). The enjoyment of this precious witness is conditioned upon our walking with the Lord. If we get spiritually cold or backslide, we must not expect to experience the assurance that we are really sons of God, although the fact of our sonship rests squarely upon what the Lord Jesus has accomplished for us and not upon our experiences, however precious they may be.

Anointing.

In II Cor. i. 21, 22 Paul wrote:

“Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

John, likewise in his first epistle wrote:

“But ye have an unction (anointing) from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (I John ii. 20).

“But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth and is no lie” (I John ii. 27).

The verb *chrío* and the noun *chrisma* occur only in those Scriptures written during the Acts period and relate to the distributing of evidential gifts that are listed in I Cor. xii. One of these gifts is spiritual knowledge (verse 8) and the reference in John’s first epistle makes it quite clear that this came directly from the Holy Spirit apart from human mediation; “ye need not that any man teach you”. “Ye know all things.” When we “rightly divide” the Word, we shall have no problem with the fact that this does not obtain today. It is only as we ‘search the Scriptures’ like the Berean of old meditate and pray for ‘opened eyes’ by the Holy Spirit, that divine illumination comes. If we are not prepared to dig into the treasures of the Word of God, we shall miss much. There is little in the way of enlightenment and understanding of the Scriptures for lazy Christians.

Sealing.

The seal speaks of the completed undertaking whether in the rational or spiritual world. The sealing of the Holy Spirit belongs to those who are justified and perfected for ever in Christ. In II Cor. i. 22 we read “. . . . God Who hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts”. In Eph. iv. 30 we are exhorted to “grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”. In the first chapter the Apostle Paul states:

“. . . . Christ: in Whom ye also, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. i. 13, R.V.).

The student should be careful to avoid the A.V. rendering “*after* that ye heard *after* that ye believed” which is completely misleading. There is no ‘after’ in the original Greek. The moment of ‘hearing’ and ‘believing’ was the same moment when the Holy Spirit performed His work of sealing. There is no basis here for the second blessing or filling of the Holy Spirit after salvation as taught by the Pentecostals, and this should be a warning to those who seek to base doctrine on translations alone.

Sanctification.

The basic meaning of sanctification is *separation* for a particular purpose. Its first occurrence in the Bible gives us this sense in connection with the sabbath:

“And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it He had rested from all his work which God created and made” (Gen. ii. 3).

Here the purpose is stated; God had ceased working on the seventh day, not because He was tired, but by reason of its typical value and the N.T. later is to tell us that this was a picture of the “rest (sabbath) that remains to the people of God” (Heb. iv. 9 margin). God’s choice and separation of us as believers in Christ was in order that we should be “holy and without blame” (Eph. i. 4). This is absolutely basic to the purpose of the ages in bringing all things back to spotlessness and perfection. No wonder then that we read

in Heb. xii. 14 “. . . . holiness (sanctification), without which no man shall see the Lord”, and also Heb. x. 10:

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

This is primarily received by the believer in the same way that he is saved, namely by trust in Christ’s redemptive work on the cross:

“. . . . Christ Jesus, Who of God *is made unto us* wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification (*holiness*), and redemption” (I Cor. i. 30 and see Eph. v. 25-27).

It is God Who both saves and sanctifies and it is the Holy Spirit Who applies this to the believer “. . . . God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation *through sanctification of the Spirit* and belief of the truth” (II Thess. ii. 13). It is absolutely impossible for any man to make himself holy. If he could do so, there would be no need for the work of the Lord Jesus and His great sacrifice for sin.

There is however a progressive or experimental sanctification that should follow from this. The work of the Holy Spirit in the believer enables him to walk day by day so as to please the Lord. It is written:

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour” (I Thess. iv. 3, 4).

Timothy was informed by Paul, that “*having been sanctified*” he was “meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (II Tim. ii. 21). Through the operation of the Holy Spirit, the work and the mighty resurrection power of Christ is applied to the believer who is set apart by God, making him sufficient for all his needs and daily walk, anticipating that day in resurrection, when he will be presented “holy and without blemish”, being conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. viii. 29).

The Earnest.

We take the liberty of quoting from our work *The Unfolding Purpose of God* on this point:

“The word rendered ‘earnest’ is interesting. In Gen. xxxviii. 17, 18, 20 it is used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the O.T., to render the word ‘pledge’. In a slightly different form it meant an engagement ring, a pledge of marriage and was used by the Phoenicians to signify the first installment of a payment which would be made in full later on. Just as God gave Israel a ‘first installment’ as it were of the good land of Canaan before they entered it, by allowing the spies to bring back the enormous grapes of Eshcol and its luscious pomegranates and figs (Numb. xiii. 17-27), so God the Holy Spirit is graciously pleased to give us here and now glimpses of the coming glory, and these are a divine pledge that God’s will and plan cannot be frustrated. *The goal must be reached.* Now we have the *firstfruits* of the Spirit (Rom. viii. 23). Then it will be the *reality* where Christ is exalted to the Majesty on high” (Page 63).

This is further confirmed by the fact that the Holy Spirit has sealed us *until the day of redemption* as we have already seen. God’s seal cannot be broken either by Satan or the believer. The Lord will not allow anything whatsoever to come between the believer and

the realization of his 'blessed hope'. What abiding joy and confidence this should give, specially when we remember our own frailty and failing.

The great redemptive purpose of God which embraces all things in heaven and earth does not rest upon any created being, but upon God's own almightiness, foreknowledge and wisdom. If one of these was only partial or if it rested upon us in any way, we could have no real assurance that God would attain His glorious goal. Truly we can say with Paul "O the depth of the riches both of the *wisdom* and *knowledge* of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. xi. 33).

No.3. pp. 41 - 45

Types of the Holy Spirit.

Oil.

In the Old Testament we find truth set forth in picture form or types. Particularly is this so with regard to redemption and atonement which are set forth by animal sacrifice. There are many types of Christ which foreshadow His Person and His work and with some of these are blended types of the Holy Spirit. The sweet savour offerings are apart from the sin offerings, in that they do not portray the Lord Jesus as the sin-bearer, but set forth the perfection of His Person and His service.

In the meal offerings of Lev. ii. 1-6 we see Christ foreshadowed in His sinlessness. There were to be no lumps; its consistency must be perfect. But with it was blended oil, and oil was also poured upon it. Oil was used for healing, for comfort, for illuminating and anointing for specific purposes. Likewise the Holy Spirit heals, comforts, illuminates and consecrates. With consecration in view, before the Lord Jesus commenced His public ministry, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him as a *dove*, which is another picture of the Spirit of God (Matt. iii. 16, 17).

It was as the perfect Man He was sustained all through His life and witness by the Holy Spirit and it is important to realize that the Spirit was given to the Lord in an unlimited way, "without measure". In John iii. 34 we read: "For He Whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for *God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him*". As God He needed no strengthening, but as Man He rendered all His service and witness by the power of the Spirit. This is what made the action of the Pharisees and Sadducees so terrible in asserting that He performed His miracles by the power of Beelzebub or Satan (Matt. xii. 24-32).

The Lord Jesus declared that this is the one sin that cannot be forgiven, for it should be obvious that anyone who declares that God accomplishes His work by the power of Satan, the liar and the prince of darkness, puts himself outside the realm of salvation and forgiveness. Satan is no Saviour! but God's greatest enemy. Some in this age have been tormented with the thought that they have sinned terribly and committed the unforgivable

sin. It is not possible to do this unless they have blasphemed exactly as these Pharisees did. This relates to *one specific sin only*, the one noted above. All *other* sin is forgivable, as the Lord made clear.

So we see that our Saviour was consecrated by the Holy Spirit at the beginning of His ministry to Israel. It is interesting and instructive to note how oil was used in the O.T. in connection with the cleansing of the leper and his being received back into fellowship. Leprosy was a type of sin and the leper represents all of us as we are in ourselves, for “there is none righteous *no, not one*”. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. iii. 10, 19, 23). Lev. xiv. 10-42 should be read carefully. The priest had to pour oil into his left hand and apply it to the leper’s *ear*, the thumb of his *right hand*, the *great toe* of his right foot, and then *upon the blood* of the trespass offering. What was left was poured on the *head*.

Translated into spiritual terms we have the cleansing and sanctification of the entire person by the Spirit’s work which the oil typifies. The ear is no longer a vehicle for receiving the things of the flesh and the world, but is now ‘swift to hear’ the voice of God, speaking through His Word. The hand is no longer to be used as an instrument of wrong doing, but to be stretched forth in acts of righteousness and grace. The foot is no longer to tread in the pathway of sin and folly, but to go in the way marked out by the Lord and His will. Finally the whole man is to be dedicated to the Lord in the energy of the Holy Spirit.

We should also note that the ‘oil’ was put upon the ‘blood of the trespass offering’. The work of the Holy Spirit rests upon the redemptive work wrought by the Saviour on Calvary’s cross and they go together. As sinners, we could know nothing of the truth represented by the ‘oil’ save on the ground of what is set forth by the ‘trespass offering’. God’s practical illustrations of truth are always accurate.

Not only did the ‘oil’ symbolize consecration, but it served as the source of light in the Tabernacle and Temple (cp. Exod. xxv. 6) reminding us in a twofold way that the Holy Spirit is the only source of spiritual light, for He alone can give the illumination and understanding of the Word of God, enabling us in our turn to “shine as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of life” (Phil. ii. 15, 16).

Further, one of the abiding gifts of the Spirit is joy. In Psa. xlv. 7 there is a reference to the ‘oil of gladness’ and Paul declares the ‘fruit of the Spirit is joy’ (Gal. v. 22). This is also one of the abiding and precious gifts of the Saviour which the Spirit makes real to the believer who looks away from temporal things for lasting satisfaction and rests upon the unchanging Word of God.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John xv. 11).

Such will be constantly full of the ‘oil of gladness’ in spite of there being so much to depress all around us.

Wind.

The action of the Holy Spirit is likened to wind by the Lord Jesus when to Nicodemus He said:

“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou heareth the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John iii. 8).

The Authorized Version presents difficulties here. The word ‘listeth’ is old English for the Anglo-Saxon *lusteth* which meant pleases or desires. The original uses *thelo*, to wish or desire. Has the wind got a will of its own? Furthermore we *do* know whence it comes and whither it goes for we use the points of the compass to describe its direction (compare Job i. 19; Eccles. i. 6; Ezek. xxxvii. 9). When John wanted to refer to the wind he used the normal Greek word for it, *anemos*: “And the sea arose by reason of a great wind (*anemos*) that blew” (John vi. 18). But in chapter iii. 8 he uses *pneuma*, spirit, so the verse begins and ends with this word. Taking these facts into consideration we render the verse:

“The Spirit breathes where He wills, and His voice thou hearest; but thou knowest not whence He cometh or whither He goeth. Thus it is with everyone who has been begotten by the Spirit.”

The context shows the contrast between flesh and spirit, earthly things and heavenly things. As the Holy Spirit in His movements is contrary to and above nature (i.e. supernatural), so is that which is begotten of the Spirit. Just as the unsaved world only once born, neither knows Christ nor those who have a second birth (I John iii. 1), so the working of the Spirit within the believer, the new will and the new desires, are unknown to mankind around us.

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

There is a distinct difference in the work of the Holy Spirit during the O.T. period and that covered by the N.T. In O.T. days He came upon men to strengthen and equip them for some specific work, but He did not abide with them and indwell them.

The Lord Jesus gave a new aspect of His work as His own was finishing and He was under the shadow of the cross. To the disciples He said:

“And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that *He may abide with you for ever*; even the Spirit of truth for He dwelleth with you, *and shall be in you*” (John xiv. 16, 17).

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit was unknown during O.T. times. This does not mean that His activities were small and little known. Various O.T. saints knew by experience His gracious enabling. In Exod. xxxi. 1-5 we read:

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning

(clever, ingenious) works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship” (see also Exod. xxxv. 30-35).

Here was the Spirit of God specially equipping this man to make objects of beauty for the dwelling place of God in the Tabernacle. God is worthy only of the best. The second best will not do, and this is a lesson we can all learn. Too often God has been offered anything but the best by His people. It is easy to say “our best is nothing worth” and make this an excuse for giving Him anything no matter how inferior it is. We need the spirit of David when he assembled all the costly materials for building God’s permanent house, namely the Temple. I Chron. xxix. should be read carefully and there we shall see how David gave the very best that he could obtain. He could say “I have prepared *with all my might* for the house of the Lord” (verse 2) and then follows a list of exceeding precious things of gold and silver, wood, marble and all kinds of precious stones and at the end of it all David said “for all things come of Thee and *of Thine own* have we given Thee” (verse 14).

In our service let us never offer the Lord anything but the best of our ability, even though this is far from perfect.

The activity and enabling of the Holy Spirit is clearly seen in the book of Judges. We see Him coming upon Othniel, Caleb’s younger brother, to execute his duties as judge and also deliver Israel from their enemies:

“And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the Lord delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim” (Judges iii. 10).

Exactly the same thing happened with Gideon (Judges vi. 34). So much so that God reduced Israel’s army from 32,000 men to 300, and He said “The people that are with thee are *too many* for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, *Mine own hand hath saved me*” (Judges vii. 2). How well God knows the frailty and sinful pride of human hearts! No wonder He has devised His mighty redemption plan so that no man may “have a finger in the pie” as it were, and boast of his own achievements. The most man can do is to exercise faith in what God has accomplished on his behalf. It is “not of works lest any man should boast” (Eph. ii. 8, 9). God plans to have all the glory at the consummation. “Unto Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever” (Eph. iii. 21).

We have noted how the Holy Spirit came upon leaders in the book of Judges, strengthening them so that they were able not only to judge Israel righteously, but also to deliver them again and again from their mighty enemies. We have seen how Othniel and Gideon were enabled by the Spirit's might to accomplish what God had purposed for them.

Jephthah had a similar experience (Judges xi. 29) and so did Samson. As a child Samson was specially blessed of the Lord, "And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times (to and fro) in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol" (xiii. 24, 25). He was given special strength by the Spirit to destroy an attacking lion (xiv. 5, 6), also thirty of the Philistines of Ashkelon and in the next chapter 1,000 more (xv. 11-15). Yet what a contradiction he was, swayed as he was alternately by the flesh and Spirit! In spite of this, the God of all grace and longsuffering used him to carry out His purpose for Israel's need at that particular time and we must not forget that his name occurs in the list of overcomers given in Heb. xi. Truly God's judgments are very different from man's, for He looks not at the outward appearance, but on the heart (I Sam. xvi. 7). God is first concerned about the *mind* with its motives, its plans, its hopes and fears and all is naked and open to Him (Heb. iv. 13). Such an assessment is impossible by a human being and this is one of the reasons why human judgment is so often wrong and unjust. How good it is to realize that all we are and all we have done will be assessed one day by the *righteous Judge* (II Tim. iv. 8) Who is free from all bias and makes no mistakes, and Whose overriding motive is *love*.

We have another problematic character in Saul, who started so well, like Solomon of a later date, and ended so badly. Saul was man's choice, but even so, God did not withhold the Holy Spirit's enabling from him. Once again Israel became involved with their enemies, this time the Ammonites who threatened to destroy the Israelites at Jabesh-gilead. It was at this time of danger that the Holy Spirit came upon Saul and so strengthened him that he was enabled to lead his people to victory (I Sam. xi. 6). So much so that the Ammonites were slain and scattered "so that two of them were not left together" (xi. 11). This was not Saul's first experience of the Spirit's power, for the previous chapter recalls Saul's ability to prophesy among the company of prophets who met him (x. 10), given again by the enduement of the Spirit of God.

It is clear then that this man's declension was not due to any lack of enabling of the Holy Spirit, but rather his refusal to carry out the Lord's will and to put Him first in all things. As man's choice we are not surprised that he failed and God finally said to Samuel:

" How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse, the Bethlehemite: for I have provided Me a king among his sons" (I Sam. xvi. 1).

A little later on we read "But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him" (xvi. 14). Once the Holy Spirit's power was removed, this man went down hill rapidly and finally ended by having delight with spiritism, so strongly forbidden by the Mosaic law.

God's choice of a king for Israel centred upon David. Samuel was divinely guided, for when David as a youth was brought into his presence we read that "the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward" (I Sam. xvi. 12, 13). Nor did the Holy Spirit leave him all through his life, for, in spite of his failures, his heart was right with the Lord and this is the first thing that comes under God's scrutiny as we have seen. David knew that he deserved to lose the Spirit's influence, for, after his sin with Bath-sheba, he said "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psa. li. 11). The Reformers, not realizing the change of dispensation, brought this prayer over into the morning prayer of the Church of England and each Sunday those who worship here ask God not to take the Holy Spirit from them. But, as we shall see, this is what the Lord never does in this age of grace. "Right division" can save us from many mistakes in doctrine. The Holy Spirit is now a permanent indweller in the believer. The Lord Jesus said:

"I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, *that He may abide with you for ever* for He dwelleth with you, and shall be *in you*" (John xiv. 16, 17).

This is one of the great differences between the O.T. dispensation and the present one.

The Holy Spirit in His relationship to the world.

The Lord Jesus dealt with that relationship in John xvi. 7-11:

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth, It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more, of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."

There are some who seek to restrict the meaning of *elengcho* (translated 'reprove') to the thought of enlightening, but this is misleading. Enlightening there certainly is with regard to the Holy Spirit's work with the unsaved world, but it is enlightening *regarding their sinful condition* and a conviction that this is so. The usage of this word in the N.T. is decisive. It occurs 17 times (Matt. xviii. 15; Luke iii. 19; John iii. 20; viii. 9, 46; xvi. 8; I Cor. xiv. 24; Eph. v. 11, 13; I Tim. v. 20; II Tim. iv. 2; Titus i. 9, 13; ii. 15; Heb. xii. 5; James ii. 9; Rev. iii. 19). Typical occurrences are Titus i. 13 and ii. 15 where 'enlighten' would be completely unsatisfactory as a translation.

The threefold work of the Spirit is described by the Lord as being connected with (1) sin, (2) righteousness, and (3) judgment. Note that it is *sin* in the singular, not *sins*. It goes to the root and deals with the parent sin of unbelief 'of sin', the Saviour said, "*because they believe not on Me*" (John xvi. 9). This is the one sin that completely alienates from God. In fact, it makes the God of truth a liar. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son" (I John v. 10-12). This is something that God will not tolerate. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is (i.e. exists), and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him", and earlier in the verse, "without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Heb. xi. 6).

Now “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (or Christ)” (Rom.x.17). So it is evident that the parent sin of unbelief has to do with man’s attitude to the written and living Word of God. This is absolutely basic, and it is because of this drift away from believing the Word of God and the Christ of that Word that we see the apostasy deepening today with all the terrible problems that accompany it. It was not for nothing that one of the Apostle Paul’s last commands to Timothy was to “Proclaim (preach) the Word” (II Tim. iv. 2), and there is certainly no substitute for this if we wish to see the truth progressing and darkness being banished.

As regards salvation, man can do nothing to achieve this, and it is for this reason that all has already been done for man by the Lord Jesus Christ. His last words were “It is finished (completed)” (John xix. 30) and a completed work needs no additions. This is a hard lesson for man to learn, for he believes that he *can* and *must* do something, and all the false religions are agreed on this one fact, however much they may differ among themselves. But the truth is that God has done *everything* that is needful, leaving the individual with only the one issue, believing or not believing what He has done. The true gospel does not present something for the unsaved to do. Rather it presents something for them to believe, and the Holy Spirit’s work is to convict the lost about the character and extent of the sin that “they believe not on Me (Christ)” (John xvi. 9) and then points them to the Saviour, “Who can save to the uttermost” (Heb. vii. 25).

The second characteristic of the Holy Spirit’s present work in relation to the world is “of righteousness, because I go to My Father” the Lord declared (John xvi. 10). Without doubt, this is Christ’s righteousness and upon this glorious fact the whole of redemption rests. If the Lord was not perfectly holy in thought, word and deed from the cradle to the grave, then He would have needed a Saviour Himself. He could not have been a Saviour of others and how could a sinner and a blasphemer have been raised from the dead and exalted to the glory of heaven’s holiest of all with everything under His feet? His going to the Father in resurrection and ascension was the fitting consummation of His perfect work on earth and a triumphant vindication of His righteousness so that He can be the Saviour of the world. This the Holy Spirit reveals in measure to the convicted sinner.

The third characteristic is found in the Lord’s statement “of judgment, because the prince of this world is judge”. Here we have the usurper, Satan, whose one object is to take God’s place and exercise his dominion. At the moment while God is overall the world system is not being run by Him, but rather by the deceiver who has “blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (II Cor. iv. 4). Satan aspires to the very titles of Christ. It was Satan who offered the kingdoms of this world to the Lord in the wilderness. For the moment Satan has usurped them and the Lord did not deny this. He is the false prince or ruler of this world (John xiv. 30) just as Christ is the true One (Revelation i. 5). Satan is the false God of this age and the Word of God does not hesitate to describe him as such (II Cor. iv. 4), but it is the Lord Jesus Christ Who is the true One (John i. 1). But, thank God, the enemy has been judged. The victory of Calvary means his defeat and final overthrow. The sentence has not been carried out yet, but the

time is coming when it will surely take place and sin and death and the deceiver will be finally removed from God's perfected universe.

The Holy Spirit as the life-giver.

This brings us to the doctrine of regeneration, the basic meaning of which is *birth* and the *beginning of life*. One of the terrible consequences of sin is that it has brought humanity into a state of death both physically and spiritually. Is there any future for a dead man so far as this world is concerned? The answer is decidedly 'no', unless he can be brought to life again. Eph. ii. 1 describes believer as being "dead in trespasses and sins" as far as the past was concerned, and many other Scriptures clearly show the ravages that sin has made on the human mind and understanding.

How does God remedy this? He does so in two ways: (1) by giving sinners a second birthday, a spiritual one, hence the Lord's words to a religious man, "ye must be born again" (John iii. 3, 7). This only goes to show it is possible to have religion without life! (2) By making men new creations (II Cor. v. 17).

No.5. pp. 81 - 86

We have seen how regeneration and re-creation are God's answers to the problem of spiritual death which is the result of sin. It should be quite obvious that, just as a dead man cannot bring himself to life again physically, neither can he give himself spiritual birth. The Lord Jesus Christ described this spiritual life as a 'must', declaring to a leader of Israel, Nicodemus, that without this he could not 'see the kingdom of God' (John iii. 3, 7).

Now the Author or Begetter of this new life is none other than the Holy Spirit, for Christ declared that a man must be 'born of the Spirit' (John iii. 5-8). He is the quickener, the life giver. Let us not lose truth because an archaic word 'quicken' is used. To quicken has nothing to do with pace or movement, but means 'to give life' and this is the basic need of all sinful mankind which is under the dominion of sin and death. All must start here from the spiritual angle. It is possible to be very religious, to be absorbed in ritual and good works and yet to be dead spiritually. Thousands do not realize this, and they imagine that by their religious activities they are fully meeting God's demands, but these can never of themselves produce the life of God which is eternal.

The second effect of the Holy Spirit's work in regeneration is to bring these quickened ones into family relationship with God. It is a generally accepted idea, but quite false, that God is the Father of all mankind, and so all the world can be looked upon as His children. The statement of John i. 11, 12 shows the error of this:

"He came to His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power (the right) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe

on His Name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

It is only by the spiritual birth and creative activity of the Holy Spirit that any person becomes a child of God and can look to Him and call Him Father. All mankind has relationship to God as Creator and Judge, but not as Father. The universal fatherhood of God is an untruth, lulling the minds of the unsaved into a false sense of security.

It has been the habit of some dispensationalists to keep regeneration to Israel and the new creation to the Body of Christ. But we need to remember that the word translated regeneration occurs *after* Acts xxviii. in Titus iii. 5 and if we want unadulterated truth, we must be prepared to be absolutely accurate in our study. It is easy to make rigid distinctions which do not have the backing of Scripture. On the other hand, it is true to say that creation goes deeper than birth. Adam was *created*, but Abel was *born*. Nevertheless the basic thought underlying these two conceptions is the beginning of spiritual *life*, and this is where we must all start if we have any place in God’s great redemptive purpose.

Some confuse regeneration with conversion. Regeneration is solely God’s work. Conversion, or turning, is the act of man as a result of this work. Regeneration deals with *life*, just as justification and sanctification deal with *sin*. These different aspects need to be clearly distinguished. As we study the Word we shall find that the whole Godhead is concerned with regeneration:

The Father.

“. . . . the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will *begat He us with the Word of truth*” (James i. 17, 18).

The Son.

“For the Bread of God, is He Which cometh down from heaven, and *giveth life unto the world*” (John vi. 33 and see x. 28; and xvii. 2).

The Holy Spirit.

“The wind bloweth where it listeth so is every one that is *born of the Spirit*” (John iii. 8).

The same is true of the resurrection of Christ (Gal. i. 1; John x. 18; I Pet. iii. 18). As the life of God is a basic need for a dead world, we are not surprised to find that it is not confined to the Gospels. Both Titus i. 1, 2 and II Tim. i. 1 clearly teach that this unending life is a precious possession of each member of the Body of Christ, for what is the use of speaking about blessing in heavenly places without life to enjoy it?

“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness: *in the hope of eternal life*, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began (the beginning of time)” (Titus i. 1, 2),

and in his last epistle:

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of *life which is in Christ Jesus*” (II Tim. i. 1).

At the end of the first epistle to Timothy he describes it as “the life which is life indeed” (I Tim. vi. 19 R.V.). This future life is the *real* one; the present is only a shadow. Eternal life in the epistle is a gift and cannot be revoked.

The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

We have noticed in past studies that the Holy Spirit’s presence with men was temporary, and it was not until the gift of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter that it could be said that He would abide with the believer for ever and be in him (John xiv. 16, 17). The Apostle Paul confirms this in Rom. viii. 9 and 11:

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that *the Spirit of God dwell in you*”

“But if the *Spirit* of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead *dwell in you*, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies *by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.*”

Not only this, but the Lord Jesus Himself indwells the believer. Later on in Ephesians Paul was to pray that these believers might be strengthened by the Spirit in order that *Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith* (Eph. iii. 16, 17). With two such mighty indwellers we can surely accomplish all God’s will for us whatever this may involve!

Spirit or spirit?

There is great difficulty in translation to know when to render *pneuma*, spirit, with a capital “S” or a small ‘s’. The translator can get no help either from the original Greek manuscripts or the printed editions of the Greek Testament. One class of manuscripts is written all in capitals. These are called “Uncials”. The other class is written all in small letters with very few capitals at the beginning of books or sections, or of large paragraphs. These are called “Cursives”. There are no capitals for certain words as we used them today.

We get little help from the A.V. of 1611. Many editions have been printed and in these, great modifications have been made from time to time. We can say that none of the existing editions of the A.V. exactly represents that of 1611. The use of capitals was much more common in the 17th century and words like Sabbath, Ark, Mercy-Seat, Altar always had capitals. The modern tendency is to diminish their use.

As a consequence of this, the translator is compelled to fall back on the context and weigh up carefully whether a capital “S” should be used, thus making it refer to the Holy Spirit, or a small ‘s’, referring to His gifts or to some psychological use. As the word *pneuma*, spirit occurs some 385 times in the Received Text, the problem is a frequent one. The reader should therefore bear in mind that capitals in any translation are the opinions of the translator and become interpretation rather than translation. Moreover, they obviously affect the sense of the passage in which they occur.

It is very surprising that so little has been written to deal with this subject. The best work we know is Dr. E. W. Bullinger's *The Giver and His Gifts*, which deals with every occurrence of the word 'spirit' in the N.T. Unfortunately at the moment it is out of print. If one carefully studies a chapter like Rom. viii., where the word 'spirit' occurs frequently, one is constantly faced with this problem of when to use capitals. In the current editions of the A.V. the capital "S" is used all through the first 14 verses with the exception of 'spiritually minded' in verse 6. The R.V. is very different and commences using a small 's' in verse 4, making 'spirit' the opposite of 'flesh', in other words the two natures in the believer are the subject, and we feel this to be nearer to that which the Apostle Paul was intending. Let no one think that the Holy Spirit is being eliminated in this way for there cannot be a gift without a Giver and so there cannot be a new nature in the believer without the work of the Holy Spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which born of the Spirit is spirit" (John iii. 6). The Giver and the gift clearly appear in verse 16 of Rom. viii.

The Apostle Peter in his second epistle describes this gift coming through "exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be *partakers of the divine nature*" (II Pet. i. 3, 4). Every truly saved person therefore possesses a small portion of God's holy nature implanted within by the Holy Spirit and this in direct contrast to the old sinful nature inherited from fallen Adam, hence the internal conflict that is often experienced. The doctrine of the two natures in the believer is of great importance and failure to understand the teaching of the Word of God on this subject can cause many difficulties both in the interpretation of Scripture and in the individual life. Here again a work of Dr. Bullinger is of great help, *The Two Natures in the Child of God* and this should be carefully considered by lovers of the Word.

A study of the word 'spirit' in the N.T. will reveal that it is used in fourteen different ways. Readers who have *The Companion Bible* should turn to Appendix 101 where much helpful information is given. Sometimes it is employed with the definite article "the" and sometimes without it. It is used with *hagion* holy in four ways:

- (1) *pneuma hagion* (holy spirit).
- (2) *hagion pneuma* (spirit holy).
- (3) *the hagion pneuma* (the holy spirit).
- (4) *the pneuma the hagion* (the spirit the holy).

All these are rendered in the A.V. "the Holy Spirit", but is this correct? *Pneuma hagion* (without the definite article) occurs 52 times in the N.T. and often refers to the gift the Holy Spirit gives rather than Himself, whereas the longer expression (4) refers to Him personally. It has been pointed out that the Acts of the Apostles is really the Acts of the Holy Spirit, for He is the dominating personality of the book, and this longer emphatic expression referring to Himself and His activities occurs 15 times (i. 16; ii. 33; v. 3; vii. 51; x. 44, 47; xi. 15; xiii. 2, 4; xv. 8; xix. 6; xx. 23, 28; xxviii. 25).

There is no doubt that great care is needed in interpreting the various phrases employed in the N.T. containing the word 'spirit', otherwise wrong doctrines can be built up which lead to error and wrong understanding of other parts of holy Scripture.

No.6. pp. 101 - 106

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

With baptism, we come to a doctrine that has done more to shatter external unity in Christendom than anything else. Many are the ideas that Christians have concerning baptism, some of them leading to division and disunity. We should seek to study the Scriptures on this point with an open, teachable mind, and if necessary, be willing to unlearn and learn afresh. First of all, let us look at the words used. The verbs are *bapto* and *baptizo*. The former is used only three times in the N.T., namely Luke xvi. 24, John xiii. 26 and Rev. xix. 13. The word means to dip or stain. *Baptizo*, on the other hand is of frequent occurrence, namely 79 times. Its primary meaning is to immerse or submerge. The secondary meaning is described by Dr. J. W. Dale in his *Classic Baptism*, p.354:

“Whatever is capable of thoroughly changing the character, state, or condition of any object, is capable of baptizing that object; and by such change of character, state or condition does, in fact, baptize it.”

It is in this secondary sense that the word is used in most of its occurrences in the N.T. We do not intend here to deal with the doctrine of baptism in its various usages in the Bible. We have touched upon this subject in *The Unfolding Purpose of God*, pp.92-96. Our theme now is the Holy Spirit and His relationship to baptism; specially baptism as presented by the Apostle Paul in Rom. vi., Eph. iv. and Col. ii. Here we believe that we are dealing, not with an external type but with a great spiritual reality, the work of God and not the work of man. The baptism that the above Scriptures present is one that has permanent effects. Believers were not just baptized with water but into *Christ's death* (Rom. vi. 3). Neither man nor water could do this. It is solely the work of God the Holy Spirit, and such became permanently united with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, so that all of their spiritual values are secured eternally. The saved in this chapter of Romans are not taken back to a day when they were immersed by a human being in water. Rather they are taken back to Joseph's tomb where Christ was buried and there, by the work of God, they were crucified, they died, were buried, and rose again IN HIM (Rom. vi. 3-6). No amount of water could do this. It could only touch the body not the mind or spirit. In any case how can water baptism represent crucifixion?

Sunthapto, the word used by Paul, was only used of burial in a tomb, never in water, either literally or figuratively. As Col. ii. 12 expresses it, this spiritual baptism is “the work (operation) of God” and not the work of any man, Christian or otherwise. What needs to sink into our minds is the fact that Biblical types are only shadows; they are not the reality. They only imperfectly set forth the reality as an illustration.

Heb. x. 1 is not only true of animal sacrifice. It is true of all types or pictures of spiritual truths when the reality has come:

“For the law having a *shadow* of good things to come, and not the *very image of the things*, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.”

The Hebrew believers, now that they had the spiritual reality in the death and resurrection of Christ, were asked “to go on to perfection (maturity)” and leave the shadow behind. Believers today are asked to do the same thing, but many, however much they may want to do this, feel they must still cling to the “picture book”. For them this is more real because it is appreciated by the senses, something they can see, touch and feel. Such should remember that all ritual is but an illustration, a “shadowing forth”. It can never be the reality which is eternal and spiritual and God asks us to walk by faith in these glorious realities and not by sight or feeling. Dr. Merrill Unger in *Bibliotheca Sacra* writes:

“In these passages (Rom. vi. 3; Col. ii. 12; Eph. iv. 5) the holy Apostle is not considering ritual baptism at all. The sublimity of thought, the context of the argument, the exalted nature of the spiritual verities taught, support this position. He is speaking of something infinitely higher, not of a mere symbolic ordinance that is powerless to effect intrinsic change, but of a divine operation which places us eternally in Christ, and into His experience of crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection.”

In his book on *Romans* (chapter six), Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones states, in expounding verses 2 and 3:

“The conclusion therefore at which I arrive is that baptism by water is not in the mind of the Apostle at all in these two verses; instead it is the baptism that is wrought by the Spirit Again take the statement which the Apostle makes in Gal. 2:20 which is so frequently misquoted: ‘I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me’. Now there you have the identical doctrine (as Rom.6:2,3), but baptism is not mentioned. That is because water baptism does not achieve union, it does not produce it; indeed at that point it does not even represent it. This is a baptism which is carried out by the Holy Spirit when He incorporates us into, engrafts us into the Lord Jesus Christ” (page 36).

It is only fair to say that Dr. Lloyd Jones is not a dispensationalist and accepts that water baptism has its place, but certainly not in Rom. vi. and Col. ii. This makes his testimony all the more telling.

It is this spiritual baptism effected by the Holy Spirit that is the “one baptism” of Ephesians iv. As to “hope”, “Lord”, “faith”, “God” there is little, if any, difference among true believers. But when we come to baptism, so many forget that the *one baptism* is mentioned in equal terms with the above words. The emphasis in “one” is in opposition to corporate diversity in the Body of Christ. There are those who suggest water baptism can be blended with the Spirit’s baptism here and yet be looked upon as *one* baptism. We do not understand this kind of mental jugglery, but it cannot be true, not only in view of the above arguments, but also because water baptism did not form a

necessary part of the commission Christ gave Paul. “Christ sent me *not* to baptize, *but* to preach the gospel” (I Cor. i. 17) he asserted. Even though he did baptize a few, it should be quite evident from the clear command of the Lord that ritual baptism was not essential to the ministry entrusted to him and therefore it is an intruder in Eph. iv. 5 and Col. ii. as well as being quite foreign to the context. Each member of the Body is “filled full (complete) in Christ” (Col. ii. 10). What can “shadows” add to this glorious fullness? And is it not lack of appreciation of this fullness that causes many to cling to these ‘shadows’?

We would sum up by saying that the real Spirit baptism identifies and unites a believer with Christ eternally. There are three great unities in Scripture:

- (1) The unity between the members of the Godhead (John xvii.).
- (2) The unity between Christ and the believer (Rom. vi.).
- (3) The unity between believers themselves (Eph. iv.).

No wonder we are not exhorted to *make a unity*, but to *carefully guard one already made by God*.

The filling of the Holy Spirit.

Eph. v. 18 is another verse of Scripture which is often misunderstood:

“Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

This verse is beloved of Pentecostals who use it to teach that it refers to some exalted feeling in the believers experience subsequent to salvation when he receives the ‘second blessing’, or receives the baptism or fullness of the Spirit. The verb “be filled” is *pleroo* which takes the accusative case of *the thing filled*, the genitive case of *the matter* with which the thing is filled and the dative case of the *means* used to accomplish the filling, the agent. Sometimes the preposition *en* is added to emphasize the agent. In English we say “filled with”. Greek says “filled of”. Here are two examples out of many:

“And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost” (Greek, filled *of* joy and *of* holy spirit) (Acts xiii. 52).

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing” (Greek, fill you [accusative] *of* all joy and peace in [*en* with dative] believing) (Rom. xv. 13).

Coming now to Eph. v. 18 we find that ‘be filled’ is the present passive plural, “be continually filled” *en pneumati*, “by (the) Spirit” (dative). The Holy Spirit is the Filler, not the substance with which the believer is filled. The Berkeley Version translates the verse “be filled *by* the Spirit” and the N.E.B. “let the Holy Spirit fill you” and if anyone asks with what does the Holy Spirit fill the believer, the answer is given in the parallel context in Col. iii. 16:

“Let the *word of Christ* dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

The one object of the Holy Spirit in this age of grace is to uplift and glorify Christ. “He shall not speak of Himself *He shall glorify Me*, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you” (John xvi. 13, 14). Let us not make the mistake of limiting the words of Christ to those to whom He spoke on earth when He was a “minister of the circumcision (the Jew)” (Rom. xv. 8) and limited His ministry to the people of Israel (Matt. xv. 24). He now “speaks from heaven” (Heb. xii. 25) through the human channel He has appointed for the Body of Christ, the Apostle Paul (I Cor. xiv. 37; Col. i. 24-27) and the context already quoted in Col. iii. makes it quite clear what it is that the Holy Spirit fills the believer with, namely the *spirit of praise and thanksgiving*, not tongues, excitable feelings and emotions and the various experiences that Pentecostals have deduced from these verses.

We should take care to distinguish in the Scriptures between the Giver (the Holy Spirit) and His various gifts which can be rendered ‘spirit’ with a small ‘s’. A verse that cries out for this distinction is I Thess. v. 19, “quench not the spirit”. Most versions render the last word with a capital “S” and make it mean the Holy Spirit. But a moment’s thought should make us realize that it is impossible for limited finite beings to quench or bring to nought the Infinite. If we render spirit with a small ‘s’ and make it refer to any gift of the Holy Spirit, then we have truth. I Thessalonians was written during the Acts period when the various evidential gifts of the Holy Spirit were much in evidence. But no one was *compelled* to use them, “the spirits of the prophets are *subject to the prophets*” (I Cor. xiv. 32). They could be neglected or misused, hence the admonition not to ‘quench’ them. The next verse confirms this: “despise not prophesyings”, which was also one of the these gifts (I Cor. xii. 4-11).

We hope it has become clear to the reader and student of the Word of God, that not only is it of paramount importance to get Scriptural conception of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is necessary to get likewise a Scriptural conception of the Holy Spirit, especially what His work entails in this dispensation of grace. Owing to failure to ‘rightly divide’ the Word there are many faulty ideas abroad today in Christian circles concerning these persons of the Godhead and this leads to wrong doctrine and practice which does not further the truth of God, but rather the darkness and deception of the evil one. Let us test all things and only hold fast to that which is truth for today, and then seek to make it known ‘in season and out of season’ (II Tim. iv. 2).

No.7. pp. 121 - 125

Let us now sum up what we have discovered from the Word of God in relation to the Holy Spirit.

(1) *The Spirit is the divine Author of the Word of God (II Pet. i. 19-21).*

It is for this reason that the holy Scriptures are designated *the sword of the Spirit* (Ephesians vi. 17). This is the only offensive weapon permitted to the believer and the only weapon that overcomes the devil and the powers of darkness. We have a wonderful example of its use by the Lord Jesus Christ when tempted by Satan for forty days in the wilderness. Three times He foiled the devil, not by the power of His deity, but by the power of the written Word of God (Matt. iv. 1-11). This is certainly an example to all His followers, and we should remember that practice is essential for the effective use of all weapons. A scanty knowledge of the Word is useless in this spiritual warfare and the devil is certainly not afraid of Christians who keep the Book shut. It is of the utmost importance to have the word of Christ dwelling in us richly in all wisdom (Col. iii. 16) and this can only be realized when there is constant application to the Word and absorption of the same until it becomes part and parcel of our minds and beings. We are assured that it was the Holy Spirit who spoke through human channels (Mark xii. 35; Acts i. 16). This is why the Bible is the Word of God and not the word of man.

(2) *The Holy Spirit is the quickener of all spiritual life (John iii. 3, 5-8).*

This is where Christian life really begins and it cannot be realized by education alone or intellectual capacity. Theological courses may be helpful in giving information *about* the Bible, but none of them by themselves can give life eternal to a spiritually dead sinner, however religious he may appear to be. This is God's work alone, accomplished by the Spirit of God Who leads the quickened sinner to appropriate by simple faith the unending life which is found only in Christ (II Tim. i. 1; I John v. 11, 12).

(3) *The Holy Spirit's seal (Eph. i. 13).*

This is a figurative way of emphasizing the complete security of each member of the Body of Christ. No believer can accomplish this eternal security by his own power or actions. God the Holy Spirit sets His seal upon the salvation of the believer at the moment of believing. This shows that the whole work of salvation is God's and not man's. The Holy Spirit puts His stamp upon it making it secure for eternity. This work of the Spirit does *not* refer to some exalted experience subsequent to salvation. How we should rejoice and be thankful when we realize this! Some object and say that such doctrine will lead to a careless walk. If it does, then such can expect the Lord's discipline. God's truth is always balanced and in other studies we have pointed out how the Word of God teaches that not only is each member of the Body saved with an eternal salvation, but he becomes a *servant* of the Lord with a service to discharge unto Him, and then the question of good or bad service, faithful or unfaithful comes into the picture with the possibility of *reward* and divine commendation, or loss of it and shame, so that no child of God gets away with a careless walk.

(4) *The Holy Spirit baptizes.*

This is most surely a *spiritual* baptism on believing, and is only a figurative way of setting forth the eternal unity of the believer with Christ in His crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension, again most obviously the work of God alone (Rom. vi. 1-11; Col. ii. 10-12; Eph. ii. 4-6; iv. 5). This complete identification with Christ, this one-ness is little known or understood among believers today. A shallow evangelism so often prevails which is only a travesty of the glorious position and privilege of each member of Christ's Body. The lack of full and deep Bible exposition, together with the neglect of the Word of God by the individual believer is surely one of the chief causes of this lamentable condition in the religious world around us. The result is that those who in Christ are spiritual millionaires, are living like spiritual paupers because all this tremendous wealth is unknown to them!

(5) The Holy Spirit is not only the Author of God's Word, He "*opens the eyes*", gives divine understanding and reveals the Truth contained in the holy Scriptures (I.Cor.ii.9-14). This cannot be obtained in any other way, certainly not by intellectual attainment or education as we have seen.

(6) The Holy Spirit gives the *earnest*, a foretaste now of the coming glory of our heavenly inheritance to be enjoyed eternally in resurrection (Eph. i. 13, 14).

(7) The Holy Spirit *strengthens* the believer, not only for service, but as a preparation for the indwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. iii. 16).

(8) The Holy Spirit constantly intercedes for the saints and fills up the deficiency of their own praying (Rom. viii. 26, 27). How true it is that "we know not what should pray for as we ought" (Rom. viii. 26)! Believers who have no problems regarding prayer must be ignorant of this fact. The disciples felt their inadequacy, for they said to the Lord, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke xi. 1), and in response the Lord gave them the earthly kingdom prayer (xi. 2-4). This was not given to be repeated over and over again mechanically as is so often done today, with the result that the words have little meaning. It was a model on which members of God's earthly kingdom could base their praying.

If we are troubled with our prayer life, two things can help us. Prayer is not always asking God for something. True prayer is often *praise*, and we shall not have to think long before we can find something for which we thank and praise the Lord. A thankful and prayerful heart is such a wonderful antidote to spiritual declension. The nations of old sank into their darkness because they not only refused to give God His rightful place, but also *they were not thankful* (Rom. i. 20, 21). A thankless mind is one that has forgotten God, His boundless love and overwhelming blessings. No wonder the Psalmist exhorts us to 'forget not all His benefits' (Psa. ciii. 1, 2).

The second thing is to be delivered from self and remember the needs of someone else. This is true intercession where self is forgotten and the needs of others are paramount. We must always remember though, that all our praying must be subject to God's will. No believer is in the position to force God to do anything, though some seem

to act as though they are. They apparently think that if they worry the Lord long enough they will get the answer they want. This is completely unworthy and more than that, it can be dangerous.

Israel kept complaining and worrying God for flesh food when they grew tired of God's wonderful provision of the manna. The Psalmist's comment is:

"He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Psa. cvi. 15),

and so the answer to their prayer, instead of bringing them blessing brought misery in its place.

Let us never forget that, however poor our praying may be, the Holy Spirit is always interceding for us "*according to the will of God*" (Rom. viii. 26, 27) and on top of this, the Lord Jesus constantly intercedes for us too (Rom. viii. 34). In what a strong position we are then, not that this should make us careless and indifferent in our prayer life; rather it should stimulate us to "pray *always* with all prayer and supplication in the spirit" (Ephesians vi. 18) and so "*continue* in prayer and watch in the same *with thanksgiving*" (Col. iv. 2).

(9) The Holy Spirit can *quicken the memory* (John xiv. 26). How often we fail because we forget! There is not one of us that does not need reminding from time to time of the exceeding grace of God that has chosen, saved us and called us to a heavenly calling and destiny that is beyond our dreams and desserts.

(10) The Holy Spirit works in the believer to produce *His fruit*. This fruit of the Spirit is described in Gal. v. 22:

"But the fruit of the Spirit, is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (self-control)."

This nine-fold fruit is Christ-likeness *in practice* that brings glory to God in our daily witness. Fruit bearing or truth in practice is the subject of the Lord's teaching in John xv. 1-8 and He sums it up by saying:

"Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear *much fruit*; so shall ye be My disciples" (John xv. 8).

May we not disappoint Him!

(11) *The Holy Spirit abides in the believer for always:*

"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that *He may abide with you for ever.*"

"... for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John xiv. 16, 17).

In past studies we noted that in O.T. times the Holy Spirit only came upon men to achieve some special object or mission. He was not an abiding possession at that time.

(12) *The supreme work of the Holy Spirit is to uplift and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.*

“. . . . He shall *not speak of Himself* HE SHALL GLORIFY ME: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you” (John xvi. 13, 14).

Wherever the Lord Jesus is given His rightful place as First and Last, so that in “all things He has the pre-eminence (first place)” (Col. i. 18), the Holy Spirit is there whether consciously felt or not. Let us cast from our minds the idea that the power of the Spirit of God must be *felt* as an irresistible force. There is far too much religion of feeling today instead of walking *by faith* and not by sight or sense of any kind. The Lord wants us to trust Him fully *apart from feelings* and so few apparently can do that.

Today, when at last there is so much focus upon the Holy Spirit in religious circles and also unscriptural and undispensational views concerning His work and witness in this dispensation of grace, we need, as never before, to have a sound basis upon a rightly-divided Word (II Tim. ii. 15). These are days of great of deception as the Lord forewarned (Matt. xxiv. 4, 5, 11, 24; II Thess. ii. 7-10), and to deceive, Satan makes the lie look Scriptural and true. He quotes Scripture and knows the Bible a good deal better than many Christians. As Shakespeare says “He lies like the truth” and to deceive, his fabrication must look very much like truth or it would mislead no one. Those with a superficial or no knowledge of the Scriptures are in great danger whether they know it or not. Let us constantly ‘prove all things’ by the Word of God (I Thess. v. 21) and so order our lives that we ‘grieve not the Holy Spirit of God’ (Eph. iv. 30) and the Saviour and Lord Whom He exalts. He has done so much for us by giving no less than Himself (Ephesians v. 2) to redeem us and to present us one day in glory “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph. v. 25-27). May this always be first and foremost in our minds.

The Epistle to the GALATIANS.

No.1. i. 1 - 5.

pp. 221 - 226

That the epistle to the Galatians is of great importance there can be no doubt, because it deals with the fundamentals of the Christian faith, as does also the epistle to the Romans, and in some senses it is the counterpart of this epistle. Before we can consider its contents we must understand what is meant by Galatia for this will decide to whom the epistle is addressed and its date. We have to distinguish between the *kingdom* of Galatia which was situated north east of Asia Minor and the Roman *province* of Galatia, which, in addition to the kingdom went southwards to include Lycaonia, Isauria, Phrygia, and a portion in which area lay Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.

The kingdom consisted of a broad strip of land over 200 miles in length, the chief cities of which were Tavium, Ancyra and Pessinus. To which of these portions of Asia Minor was the epistle to the Galatians sent? Some scholars champion the northern district and others the southern. If the northern theory is right, Paul founded the churches there on his second missionary journey; but if the southern theory is right, it was when he was on his first missionary journey that the churches were founded in the south east.

The northern theory is championed by Bishop Lightfoot and others, whereas the southern is held by Professor W. M. Ramsay and a number of expositors. The ancestors of the northern kingdom were chiefly Gauls who poured into Asia Minor in the third century B.C. and while the majority of believers in the churches situated there were Gallic Celts, there were certainly Jews as well, for the Galatian epistle assumes an acquaintance with the O.T. which converted Gentiles could not be expected to have, except under Jewish instruction.

The northern Galatian theory was held until the nineteenth century, but since then Bible scholars, the chief of whom was Sir William Ramsay, have adopted the southern theory and others give the epistle an earlier date. If the second visit of Paul is the one mentioned in Acts xvi. 6, the epistle must have been written *after* the council of Jerusalem in Acts xv. On the other hand if the second visit is identified with that mentioned in Acts xiv. 21, when Paul and Barnabas revisited the southern Galatian churches on their return journey to Antioch, the date may be before the council and consequently about 49A.D. This would mean that Galatians is Paul's first epistle and not I Thessalonians which is usually held to be his first writing.

There is no mention of the Jerusalem Council's decisions in the Galatian epistle and this is extraordinary if this letter was written *after* Acts xv., for it would have but stressed Paul's arguments concerning the law of Moses and greatly assisted his dealings with the Galatian apostasy.

We do not think it necessary to go into more detail of the southern and northern theories in these articles, but for those who wish to pursue the matter further we would recommend Mr. C. H. Welch's comments in *The Apostle of the Reconciliation*, pp. 75-86 and those of Dr. Donald Guthrie in the second volume of his *New Testament Introduction*, pp. 72-79. Mr. Welch's summary of the advantages of the south Galatian theory are as follows:

- (1) By this view no visit of Paul to Jerusalem is suppressed.
- (2) The most forcible arguments that could be used at the time are used.
- (3) No inconsistency is intruded into the Acts.
- (4) Every phrase which bears upon the date is simply and naturally explained.
- (5) The authority of the Council at Jerusalem, and the decree made, remain unimpaired.
- (6) The epistle was written from Antioch or the neighbourhood.
- (7) The churches of Galatia were those of Pisidia, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.
- (8) The epistle is probably the earliest book in the New Testament.

(The Apostle of the Reconciliation, p.86).

Accordingly we adopt to south Galatian position.

The object of this letter is clear. The Apostle had heard of serious trouble in the Galatian churches which was twofold, just as it was at Corinth. Judaizers claiming authority from Jerusalem, were trying to place the yoke of the Mosaic law on Gentile believers, and their method was to deny Paul's apostolic standing and discredit his teaching. The rapidity with which the Galatians had departed from the freedom of the gospel served as a goad to the Apostle and the urgency of the situation caused him to dispense with formalities and write in a style that was burning with deep feeling and indignation.

He therefore sets out in this epistle what was destined to become the charter of Christian liberty through the subsequent history of the professing church. Dean Farrar writes:

"St. Paul saw that it was time to speak out, and he did speak out. The matter at issue was one of vital importance. The very essence of the Gospel, the very liberty which Christ had given, the very redemption for which He had died, was at stake. The fate of the battle hung apparently upon his single arm. He alone was the Apostle of the Gentiles. To him alone had it been granted to see the full bearings of this question. A new faith must not be choked at its birth by the past prejudices of its nominal adherents. The hour had come when concession was impossible, and there must be no facing both ways in the character of his conciliatoriness. Accordingly he flung all reticence and all compromise to the winds. Hot with righteous anger, he wrote the epistle to the Galatians. It was his trumpet note of defiance to all the Pharisees of Christianity, and it gave no uncertain sound" (*The Life and Work of St. Paul*, pp. 427-428).

Coming now to the exposition of the epistle we first exhibit the structure as a whole:

- A | i. - ii. 14. Paul's apostolic authority and gospel. Salutation.
- B | ii. 15 - iv. 11. Doctrine. / Faith v. Works.
 - \ Liberty v. Bondage.
- B | iv. 12 - vi. 16. Practice. / Spirit v. Flesh.
 - \ Liberty v. Bondage.
- A | vi. 17, 18. The marks of the Lord Jesus. Benediction.

The epistle sets out in startling contrast the *freedom* of the gospel and the *bondage* of the law. One is connected with the *spirit*, and the other with the *flesh*. One is linked with the Jerusalem which is *above*, and the other the *earthly* Jerusalem "which now is" and is in bondage. The Apostle Paul, in no uncertain language, shows the Galatian believers where their defection is leading them—to utter slavery which in practice cancels the glorious freedom in Christ.

His opening words in chapter i. are a challenge. There is no attempt to give a conventional introduction; the situation was too serious for that. First of all his Christ-given apostleship must be recognized, for without this, the message which he had to give would be of no avail. Over and over again Paul's enemies sought to disparage his apostleship. They accused him of being a self-appointed apostle; that no one could accept the story of his conversion, that he could not compare with the apostles at Jerusalem who had been appointed by Christ in His earthly ministry and had enjoyed close personal contact with Him. Paul had never seen Christ in the flesh and therefore in no sense could his apostleship be recognized.

We find the same opposition manifested in the church at Corinth and in the second epistle he is compelled to be a fool in his boasting to show that not only was his apostleship real and Christ-directed, but that he could go further in suffering for it than any other apostle (II Cor. xi. 5, 16-30).

As Charles H. Welch has pointed out, the opening chapter of the epistle is so structured to throw into relief Paul's *apostleship*, the *gospel* preached by him and his *authority*. The sections are divided by the recurrence of the three common words "not", "neither" and "but". (Shown below on the structure).

- b1 | i. 1-5. Paul's *apostleship*. / Not from men
 - { Neither through man
 - \ But through Jesus Christ
- c1 | 6-10. No change in gospel "ye received".
- b2 | 11, 12. Paul's *gospel*. / Not according to man
 - { Neither from man
 - \ But by revelation of Jesus Christ
- c2 | 13, 14. His past attitude "ye heard".
- b3 | 15-17. Paul's *authority*. / Not flesh and blood
 - { Neither from other apostles
 - \ But he went into Arabia
- c3 | i. 18-24. His present attitude "they had heard".

Thus it was that, defying all conventions, he plunges straight away into the all-important question of his apostleship. His aim was not to magnify himself, *but his office* (Rom. xi. 13), which had been given him by the risen Christ:

“Paul, an apostle (*not* of men, *neither* by man, *but* by Jesus Christ and God the Father, Who raised Him from the dead) and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia” (Gal. i. 1, 2).

The Greek word *apostolos* means “one sent by and in the name of another”, thus exhibiting the truth of Christ’s words “he that receiveth you receiveth Me” (Matt. x. 40). While his commission differed from the Twelve in a number of respects, yet its *origin* was the same, namely from the Lord Jesus Christ, and it was the *first apostleship conferred from heaven*. This God-given apostleship so vital to the truth he preached is bought forward in several of his epistles. In Rom. i. 5 he writes “Christ by Whom we have received grace and apostleship”, he states in Rom. xi. 13 “I am an apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office”. He throws out a challenge in I Cor. ix. 1 “Am I not an Apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?”. In I Tim. ii. 7 he says, “I am ordained a preacher, an apostle (I speak the truth in Christ and lie not), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth”.

There had been no problems about Paul’s apostleship from the Galatian churches, for at the first they had received him “as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus” (Gal. iv. 14). But the old enemy was doing his deadly work of sowing doubt and distrust among them by the old tactic of undermining the *messenger*, so spoiling his message. So straight away he asserts his independence from the Twelve, and in fact from any human source. He had a divine commission and as such it was not receive *from men*, neither was its origin *through man* (literally that is any human being), but it was “by Jesus Christ and God the Father”. This took place on the Damascus road as recorded in Acts ix. 22 & 26 and is expanded in Gal. i. 15, 16.

He continues by sending grace and peace from the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

“Who gave Himself for us, that He might deliver us from this present evil world (age), according to the will of God and our Father to Whom be glory for ever and ever” (Galatians i. 4, 5).

The Father gave the Son (John iii. 16) and the Son gave Himself, thus comprising the greatest of all gifts, for it embraces everything. “The Son of God Who loved me and gave *Himself for me*”, Paul wrote (Gal. ii. 20). “Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift” (II Cor. ix. 15).

The Epistle of James.

No.6. pp. 16 - 19

James now calls the Hebrew believers, who were failing so much, to amend their ways:

“Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts ye double minded. Be afflicted, and moan and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He shall exalt you” (iv. 8-10, R.V.).

The joy and laughter that the writer refers to here is the shallow and empty frivolity of the darkened world and is not to be confused with the abiding joy of the Lord which can be the believer’s precious possession at all times. James continues:

“Speak not one against another, brethren. He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law; but if thou judgeth the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. One only is the law giver and judge, even He Who is able to save and to destroy: but who art thou that judgest thy neighbour?” (James iv. 11, 12, R.V.).

James adopt the same attitude as the Apostle Paul on the question of unfair criticism of other brothers in Christ (Rom. xiv. 4, 9, 10-13). The only persons we are allowed to strictly judge are ourselves, “for if we would *judge ourselves*, we should not be judged” (I Cor. xi. 31), but of course this is not so attractive to the flesh as criticizing other people! The Greek *katalaleite* means literally “to talk against another” and in later Greek had the significance of talking against others behind their backs and is used in this sense by the Septuagint version of Psa. ci. 5 “Whoso privily (privately) slandereth his neighbour” and also in Psa. l. 20. Tyndale renders the word in James “back bite”, and the adjectival form is found in Rom. i. 30, translated ‘back biters’ in the A.V. and R.V. Such conduct is really a subtle form of self-exaltation, because those who indulge in it think they are very much better people than those they are criticizing. Not only this, but as James reminds us, they assume the position of judge, a role that belongs to God only.

This sad human weakness is ages old, for the O.T. also deals with it. Lev. xix. 16 reads, “thou shalt not go up and down as a *talebearer* among thy people” and verse 18: “thou shalt not avenge, *nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people*, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD”.

As Paul reminded the superior Jew “wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself” (Rom. ii. 1). No wonder James asks “who art thou that judgest another?” (James iv. 12).

In the next paragraph, the writer seems to have in mind traveling traders, probably Jews:

“Go to now, ye that say, today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow” (James iv. 13, 14, R.V.).

Such confidence about the future is presumptuous. Prov. xxvii. 1 reminds us “boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” and the Lord, in the parable of the rich fool, describes one who acted as though he infallibly knew the future and could plan accordingly to his own advantage. God’s verdict was “thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee” (Luke xii. 20). James not only reminds such of their presumption but also of their frailty. He says that their life is no better than a vapour which appears for a little while and then vanishes away (iv. 14). The future is entirely subject to God. Therefore, in looking to the future regarding ourselves we should constantly say “if the Lord wills” we will do this or that (iv. 15).

The Apostle Paul is a good example to us here. When he said farewell to the Ephesian believers he said “I will return again unto you *if God will*” (Acts xviii. 21). His decision to visit the believers at Corinth is qualified by the phrases “if the Lord will” and “if the Lord permit” (I Cor. iv. 19; xvi. 17). He “trusts in the Lord” that he will be able to send Timothy shortly to the Philippians and that he himself will also be able to pay them a visit (Phil. ii. 19, 24).

Of course we can say “God willing” as a mere habit, but realizing our utter dependence upon the will of the Lord, we should use these words with a deep sense of their meaning, for none of us can in any sense control the future. James reminds his readers that any who imagine they can, are indulging in proud boastings which are evil (iv. 16, 17).

Chapter v. commences with retribution for the rich who were misusing their wealth. It seems evident that James knew of such who professed the Christian faith, yet were opposing their poorer brethren:

“Go to now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have laid up your treasure in the last days” (v. 1-3, R.V.).

It is important to note the R.V. rendering “*in* the last days” rather than “*for* the last days” as the A.V. James was an early epistle in the Acts period when the nearness of the Lord’s coming for judgment and the setting up of the earthly kingdom was a possibility depending upon the repentance of Israel. This period was regarded as the last days of the dispensation by Peter, John and Paul as well as James, who is shortly going to declare that the coming of the Lord was near and as the Judge He stood at the doors (v. 8, 9). We should remember the divine judgment on Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v.) and on certain brethren at Corinth for abuses of the Lord’s supper (I Cor. xi. 30) which show clearly that the dispensation of pure grace had not yet started. Consequently James’ warnings to these rich Jews were solemn indeed.

Nowhere in the N.T. are rich people denounced merely for being rich, but for yielding to the temptations to which the rich are especially prone. One almost invariable accompaniment of wealth is the false sense of security and a love of the power it brings. In His earthly ministry the Lord said it was very difficult for rich people to enter into the

kingdom of God. He warned “Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation” (Luke vi. 24). The Apostle Paul likewise warned those who desired to be rich and the dangers that can follow such desires (I Tim. vi. 9, 10). In an age when money and material things are worshipped so much, we all need to be constantly on our guard that we are not ensnared by such attitudes of mind.

No.7. pp. 36 - 40

We have seen that the first section of chapter v. deals with the rich who were oppressing poorer brethren. Verse 4 tells us how his was being done:

“Behold, the hire of the labourers who moved your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out: and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth (hosts). Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and have taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous one; he doth not resist you” (James v. 4-6, R.V.).

This avariciousness in defrauding workers of their pay and denying them their living had always been offensive to the Lord. In the law of Moses Israel had been warned “thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy at his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down on it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it, lest he cry against thee unto the Lord and it be a sin unto thee” (Deut. xxiv. 14, 15).

In later centuries God made it known that His punishment would fall upon such inhuman conduct:

“I will come near to you in judgment; and I will be a swift witness against those that oppress the hireling in his wages” (Mal. iii. 5).

Such conduct does not escape the notice of God, for it has “entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts”. This majestic title of God is found constantly in the O.T., drawing attention to His sovereign omnipotence. He is the God of the ‘hosts’, that is the armies of heaven, multitudinous angels who are constantly at His bidding. It is rare in the N.T. occurring only here and in a quotation Paul makes in Rom. ix. 29 from Isa. v. 9. Though poor believers were being robbed and defrauded without apparently anyone to defend them on earth, yet they had as their helper and avenger none other than the Lord God omnipotent Who was ready to intervene in judgment.

A further bad trait that often characterizes the rich is luxury and extravagance. “Ye have lived in pleasure” (delicately R.V.). *Etruphesate* suggests a life of luxury and self-indulgence. The cognate noun is found in Luke vii. 25 where it describes the “delicate” living associated with king’s courts. Centuries before, Amos had denounced such a mode of life:

“Woe to them that are at ease in Zion that lie on beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches and eat the lamb out of the flock, and the calves out of the

midst of the stall that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments” (Amos vi. 1-6).

The expression ‘in a day of slaughter’ seems to refer to the day of judgment by God, such as is alluded to in Isa. xxxiv. 6 and Ezek xxi. 15. Just as animals are fattened for slaughter, so these sinful rich were ‘nourishing their hearts’, filling their lives with every form of pleasure, and thus were ready for ‘the day of slaughter’ when the Lord would come in judgment and deal with them.

As we have before indicated, James now introduces the near return of the Lord as Judge (v. 7 and 8). This second advent of Christ was possible all through the Acts period and all the epistles written during this time stress it. Careful note should be taken of Acts iii. 19-26, specially verses 19 and 20. Fuller details of this most important fact are given in the author’s *The Unfolding Purpose of God* pages 42-44. The word used for ‘coming’ is the Greek *parousia* which means personal presence and arrival on the earth rather than the act of coming to it. In secular usage it referred to the arrival of important personages on state occasions. In the N.T. it refers to the arrival of Him Who is “Kings of kings and Lord of lords” when He returns to defeat Satan and the powers of darkness and bring in a reign of justice and righteousness. Then “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). The only crown He received at His first coming was a crown of thorns. At His second coming He receives “many crowns” (Rev. xix. 12), and at last exercises complete dominion over the earth. This coming was a possibility all through the Acts period and believers were taught to live and wait for it with patience. James cites as an example the patience of the farmer who has to wait for the harvest after all his labour (James v. 7).

In the case of the believer, the Lord’s early return was not only his hope but also that of One Who is the righteous Judge and will therefore fairly assess all that has been done for Him. “Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged: behold, the Judge standeth before the doors” (v. 9 R.V.). “Grudge” in the A.V. is archaic in the sense of complain or grumble, and such conduct would come under the Lord’s condemnation at His coming. Those to whom James was writing were bidden to think of the patience and suffering of the prophets. There was scarcely one who did not have to suffer affliction in one way or another. Stephen said in his defence, “which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?” (Acts vii. 52). Perhaps the most outstanding example of this was Jeremiah, who was beaten, put in stocks, imprisoned and then thrown into a cistern. His life was one of continual suffering, yet he maintained his divine calling as a prophet, speaking for the Lord to a rebellious people.

James now brings in the experience of Job and says “Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity and merciful” (James v. 11). The word translated ‘patience’ would be better rendered ‘endurance’ for in some respects Job was not patient, specially with his so-called friends. Yet, in spite of all his heavy trials, Job’s faith did not waver. “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (Job xiii. 15) was his cry. The end or goal of the Lord was attained when Job had abandoned his own righteousness and in true penitence said, “I have heard of Thee by the

hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job xlii. 5, 6). God’s object was to bring Job to the end of himself and surely this is the Lord’s concern for all of us whatever age we live in. “Not I, but Christ” must be our continual motto. We deal with a God Who is exceedingly patient with all of us and is “very pitiful and of tender mercy” (James v. 11). As Psa. ciii. 8 expresses it, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy”.

The next section of the epistle deals with the prohibition of oaths. We do not believe that this refers to oaths in courts of law on important matters, but rather the taking of the Lord’s name in vain in ordinary conversation in an irreverent way. The Pharisees were guilty of this, and the Lord, in His Sermon on the Mount, attacked their hypocrisy and forbad all such oaths (Matt. v. 33-37). James here reiterates Christ’s teaching:

“But above all things, my brethren swear not, neither by the heaven nor by the earth, nor by any other oath; but let your yea be yea and your nay, nay; that ye fall not under judgment” (v. 12, R.V.).

The way to avoid false swearing is to be strictly truthful in one’s speech. We should always really mean what we say. Yes should mean yes, and no should mean no without any reservations and the name of God should be avoided in frivolous conversation or in a thoughtless way. “The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain” (Exod. xx. 7).

The writer of the epistle now asks a number of rhetorical questions:

“Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him” (v. 13, 14, R.V.).

We must realize the condition of the Christian world in the first century was vastly different from today. At the present time we see around us Christendom, which comprises a vast assortment of churches with varying beliefs, religious movements of all kinds, a veritable Babel of differing voices. It was not like this at the beginning. There existed the recent converts to Christianity who lived in local groups. There were no denominations as we know today. Consequently, when James refers sick people to the elders of the ‘church’, there was only one church then existing and there could be no misunderstanding of this. But today, if we apply James v. 14 to ourselves when we fall ill, to which church shall we go? Many are spiritually dead; others are modernistic and reject the fundamentals of the faith as found in the N.T. Will any church do, no matter what its tenets are?

These are problems which arise when we do not rightly divide the Word of Truth. Those who use this vital principle in their study of the Word and understand what true dispensational teaching embraces, will not be troubled by these last verses of James’ epistle. They will interpret them according to their context and that context is set in the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles. This book, one of the most important in the N.T., has been obscured by the traditional view that Israel was set aside by God at the Cross and that the Body of Christ, which belongs to the dispensation of the Mystery or

Secret (Eph. iii.), commenced on the day of Pentecost. When we carefully study the book we find that Israel, far from being cast off by God, figure prominently all through this period due to the forbearance and mercy of God and are given a further opportunity to repent and turn back to the Lord (Acts iii. 19-26). If this had taken place, then the Lord Jesus would have returned and the earthly kingdom, so graphically described by the O.T. prophets and brought so near by the first coming of the One Who was Israel's Messiah and King, would have commenced.

The confirmatory and evidential miracles, which had also been foretold in the O.T., and had accompanied the earthly ministry of this King of kings, persisted right throughout the Acts and it is in this setting that the epistle of James was written. Not to see this causes confusion and has given rise to much of modern Pentecostalism with its mixing up the earthly kingdom of the Lord with the Body of Christ and its heavenly destiny.

No.8. pp. 55 - 60

As we pointed out at the conclusion of our last study the problems raised in James.v.13-19 are greatly eased when one understands the dispensational position of this epistle. It was written during the Acts when the turning back to God in repentance by the people of Israel was a possibility. This made the realization of the earthly kingdom also a possibility, with the near return of the Lord Jesus to take the reins of government in righteousness and justice, so bringing in the time when world peace and the knowledge of God would thereby spread over the earth. This is why the evidential miracles which accompanied the Lord's earthly ministry to Israel right throughout the Acts and are alluded to in the epistles written during this period, James being one of them.

The first two of the rhetorical questions that James asks cause no problems, but the third may do so:

“Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; an if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him” (v. 14, 15, R.V.).

First of all let us say what this passage does *not* teach. The Roman Catholic doctrine of Extreme Unction is based on this verse. This so-called sacrament is used by the priest for those who are near death, in which they are anointed with previously consecrated oil. This is supposed to be effective in the forgiveness of sins of those who are too ill to make a conscious confession and so receive priestly absolution. The Douay Roman Catholic English version of the Bible has a footnote here which says “see here a plain warrant of Scripture for the sacrament of extreme unction, that any controversy against its institution would be against the express words of the sacred text in the plainest terms”. But there is no such plain teaching in these verses. There is nothing in the context to suggest that the

sick person is near death or needs prayer to prepare him for it. Furthermore the footnote deliberately alters the word translated 'elders' to 'priests'. James uses *presbuteros*=elders not *sacerdotes*=priests.

It is most significant that the usual word for priest *hierens* is never used in the N.T. for Christian ministry, with the exception of the O.T. Jewish priesthood. This word is reserved for Christ alone; and the former word is not used once in the New Testament. Moreover we should note that it is elders (in the plural) that are sent for, not one man who had so-called priestly functions. The application of oil would not be strange to a Jew for in the Talmud it is mentioned as a curative agent. In Isa. i. 6 the prophet laments that Israel's sick condition spiritually was like a body riddled with disease ". putrifying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with *oil*" (margin). We also have the parable of the good Samaritan who pours *oil* and wine into the wounds of the man lying injured by the roadside (Luke x. 34). But we must not regard the oil as the sole agent of cure in James. Sometimes the Lord heals without any intermediary means. Other times He uses them as He did when He made clay from saliva and anointed the blind man's eyes.

What is important on this subject is to realize that good health and healing are a distinctive feature of the earthly kingdom of the Lord when it is established. We all know, (but sometimes forget), the tremendous blessing of good health, for how can the experience of a full life be enjoyed without it?

This is why the Lord Jesus in His earthly ministry as a "Minister of the circumcision" (Rom. xv. 8) constantly healed bodily ailments as well as spiritual ones and moreover gave the 12 apostles the same gift. "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritan enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. *Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils (demons)*" (Matt. x. 5-8). In Mark's account we are told that "they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils (demons) and *anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them*" (Mark vi. 12, 13).

This power to heal miraculously continued right through the Acts. Peter healed and so did Paul. Even a handkerchief that had touched Paul's body healed at a distance (Acts xix. 11, 12) and we find him healing in the last chapter of the book (xxviii. 8, 9). Certain believers were also given the gift of healing by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. xii. 9). After the Acts period however, there was a dramatic change. When Paul wrote to the Philippians he expressed his great concern for the health of Epaphroditus for "he was sick nigh unto death" (Phil. ii. 27) but the Apostle does not heal him and it is unthinkable that if Paul still had the miraculous gift of healing, he would not have used it in the case of so valued a friend and companion in labour (verse 25). In II Tim. iv. 20 he has to leave Trophimus ill at Miletum and in the case of his beloved son in the faith, Timothy who was frequently ill, all he could do was to prescribe a little wine (I Tim. v. 23).

It is quite wrong to say that this gift of healing gradually disappeared in century one. As far as the Scriptures are concerned they ceased when the earthly kingdom purposes of God were suspended at the laying aside in unbelief of the earthly kingdom people, Israel, at Acts xxviii.

With all this in mind we can better understand the verses we are dealing with in James' epistle. We have already pointed out another feature of the Acts and that is the Lord's judging of His people for sin even to the extent of taking away their lives, for example Ananias & Sapphira and I Cor. xi. 28-30 makes it quite clear that illness and this death judgment had come upon many believers because of their sins in connection with the Lord's Supper, "for this cause many are *weak and sickly* among you and *many sleep*", that is, are dead.

This is the key to the understanding of the last portion of the epistle of James. It is noteworthy that James links together healing and the forgiveness of sins (v. 15) and it would appear therefore that the sickness was due to failing on the part of the one who was ill. Not only this but James also writes:

"My brethren, if any among you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall *save a soul from death*, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (v. 19, 20, R.V.).

The converting does not refer to the salvation of the unsaved, but to bring back a believer who has erred from the truth, in other words a backslider. The word used for 'err' means to wander. The N.I.V. is to the point here:

"My brothers, if any of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: whoever turns a sinner away from his error will save him from death and cover many sins."

The death here is the death judgment which was operative at this time and does not refer to eternal death, which in any case would be impossible for one who was truly saved and counted as one of the 'brethren' among them. The 'covering' of sins is the same thought as is expressed by Peter in his first epistle:

"And above all things have fervent charity (love) among yourselves, for charity (love) shall cover the multitude of sins" (I Pet. iv. 8).

True love does not expose or gloat over sins, it covers them.

The writer stresses the effectiveness of prayer when he says, "the supplication of a *righteous* man availeth much in its working" (v. 16). As an illustration he cites the case of Elijah:

"Elijah was a man of like passions with us and he prayed fervently that it might not rain and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again and the heavens gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit" (v. 17).

There are commentators who say that there is no reference to this in the O.T. They have not looked far enough. On the surface this incident looked like a stupendous act of

power on Elijah's part. It was true that the Jew accorded him a unique position among the prophets, for in Mal. iv. 5 he was declared to be the forerunner of Messiah and furthermore he was miraculously translated to heaven. Yet Elijah was a man of the Word and he knew Deut. xi. 16, 17:

“Take heed to yourselves and ye turn aside and serve other gods, and worship them, and then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and *He shut up the heaven*, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you.”

Israel in the time of Elijah was largely in apostasy and all Elijah was doing was to ask the Lord to be as good as His Word and so discipline the nation to bring them back to repentance. In I King xvii. 1 we are told:

“And Elijah the Tishbite said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth before Whom I stand, there shall not be dew or rain these years but according to my word.”

Later in I Kings xviii. 1 we have:

“And it came to pass after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in *the third year*, saying, go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.”

Moreover, the Lord Jesus confirms this in Luke iv. 25:

“But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, *when the heaven was shut up three years and six months*, when great famine was throughout the land.”

Elijah was a *righteous* man and obviously his prayer life was based upon the Word of God, hence its effectiveness. Yet in himself he was of ‘like passions’ as ourselves, just a normal man with normal limitations.

This should be a stimulus to ourselves that our own prayer ministry may be real and effective for the furtherance of the truth. The study of this practical epistle has been a help we trust, in our applying the great principle of right division in our interpretation of the holy Scriptures. We shall have learned to distinguish what is eternally true in this portion of God's Word and what is dispensational, that is, true at that time and for that particular calling related to believers who were of the twelve tribes of Israel (James i. 1).

It is only in this way shall we get to know the fullness of truth for today. We shall leave the miraculous and evidential gift of healing where the Word puts it, that is as an accompaniment of the Lord's earthly ministry to Israel and the Acts period following, when Israel was still being dealt with by the Lord and was still “first” (Acts iii. 26; xiii. 46; Rom. i. 16; ii. 8-10). This does not mean that the Lord does not now heal His people. His touch has not lost its ancient power, but all is subject to His wise will. We can constantly go to Him with all our problems including illness and leave all in His loving hands. We shall be saved from the false assumption that it is God's will that everyone should enjoy continually perfect physical health. Paul learned this with his “thorn in the flesh” which the Lord allowed to remain so that the Apostle could experience more deeply His abounding grace.

May all of us come to know in our experience that spiritual maturity (perfection) which this epistle stresses and “grow up into all things, which is the Head, even Christ” (Eph. iv. 15). So shall we be amongst those who are pressing on to the goal of maturity, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. iii. 12-15).

Men God Called

No.9. Isaiah.

pp. 11 - 16

It is sometimes suggested that the call of Isaiah is not recorded for us, and that the events recorded in chapter vi. are in fact a re-commissioning of the prophet. There seems to be no good reason for this view, except that there are prophecies which occur in the book before the sixth chapter. Yet as we read this chapter, it has a certain 'ring' to it which is strongly suggestive of an initial commission. If it is to be inferred that the preceding five chapters are chronologically before the sixth chapter, then verses 8 and 9 would suggest that the 'earlier' activity had been by a man unsent of God. We therefore take it that in this chapter we have the call and commission of Isaiah.

This being the case the historical background is clearly set for us: "in the year that king Uzziah died". There was to be a change of monarch; what did the future hold? Would the new king be a godly man or not? On the whole, king Uzziah had been a good leader of his people. We read of him:

"And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah did. And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper" (II Chron. xxvi. 4, 5).

But, alas, he did not constantly seek the Lord, and so it had to be written of him:

"And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped, *till he was strong*. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense" (II Chron. xxvi. 15, 16).

The result of this act of sacrilege was that "he was a leper unto the day of his death" (xxvi. 20, 21). His downfall came "when he was strong". Uzziah became strong through the goodness of God to him, then his heart was lifted up with pride in his prowess and, in the sight of God, he became weak. Nonetheless, apart from this lapse, he had been a good and godly king. Would his successor be as good? or would he be a king who had no place for Jehovah and worshipped Baal?

In the year that king Uzziah died, Isaiah was found pondering the future. In spite of Uzziah's example "the people did corruptly" (II Chron xxvii. 2). Would the new king be able to alter the people? Isaiah saw a need: the need for a people who would do right in the sight of the Lord. He was under no illusion as to the state of the nation: "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isa. vi. 5). God's commission was for him to "go, and tell this people" these facts (vi. 8, 9).

As with Moses, Isaiah saw a need: unlike Moses, he did not take it upon himself to act, until he was commissioned of God. But what could he have done in the

circumstances? The commission suggests that there was nothing that could be done. He saw a need: but to see a need is not, in itself, sufficient. Something more must be 'seen'.

There being nothing Isaiah could do, he did the only thing possible, he "took it to the Lord in prayer". For he was in the Temple, and "in the year that king Uzziah died", he says, "I saw the Lord". The word 'saw' signifies to see *clearly*. He had a clear concept of the God Who was to commission him. It can be comparatively easy to see the need, and equally easy to see (as in the case of Moses) a course of action, which seems to be reasonable and humanly acceptable; but in addition to seeing the need, there is the greater need to see the Lord; to have a clear concept of the God we serve. In the Temple this was granted to Isaiah.

He saw also the contrast between his knowledge of the king who had died, and the King Who lives forever. He saw the mortal and the Immortal; the leprous and the glorious; the sinful and the holy. It was the glory and holiness of Jehovah which impressed him:

"I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. vi. 1-3).

He saw also the Lord: as well as a good king who failed at the moment of his strength, a new king, untried. He saw the King Who reigns forever, Who is also the God of the Covenant: the Covenant keeping God Who would not fail, no matter what might happen.

After Isaiah's vision his reaction was the reaction of all who clearly see the Lord. Not, as is often the case today, "Jesus is my Friend", or I smile because God loves me, truth though these things may be, Isaiah's reaction was:

"Woe is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: *for mine eyes have seen the King*, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. vi. 5).

This was a depressing picture if ever there was one, a hopeless man surrounded by hopeless men, faced with the glory and holiness of the unchanging God. Such is the vision made plain in the cross of Christ. But neither vision ends there.

"Then flew one of the seraphims, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged" (vi. 6 and 7).

The discerning vision of reality leads to forgiveness; the fire of sacrifice cleanses, the blood of the cross brings peace and reconciliation. Only then is the man (or woman) God calls, fit for service, and not until the vision of God's glory and holiness and of man's weakness and sinfulness has wrought in the man the attitude which can experience the mercy and forgiveness of God, can he be commissioned for the good works "God hath

before ordained that we should walk in". Nor does the effect of the vision wear off: Paul at the end of a fruitful life of service to God confessed himself the 'chief of sinners'. Indeed it is only as the vision remains effective that service can be effective. There came the time when Uzziah trusted to his own strength, and "when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction".

Isaiah's reaction was "I am unclean". He did not react by saying "I have *done* this, or *said* that", but I *am* unclean. He was not concerned with either sins of omission or sins of commission, but what he was in himself. What he might say or what he might do was the result of what he was himself. It was not his acts which needed to be dealt with, but the man himself. Not till he had a true estimate of himself was there hope for Isaiah.

"Then flew one of the seraphims." Instantly upon true confession, upon the acknowledgment of the truth of God's assessment of us, there is cleansing and forgiveness, or the experience of blessing. Instantly, also, comes the enablement for the task to which Isaiah is called. Not until then did God present Isaiah with the challenge, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (vi. 8). Instantly Isaiah replied "Here am I; send me". Isaiah had, indeed, clearly seen the Lord. Now there was no room for false modesty. Moses had demurred, perhaps with some justification, but God would enable him: Moses persisted, and Aaron was appointed to work with him, an arrangement which, on occasions was more of a hindrance than a help. When God calls He enables.

Verses 9 and 10 give us the commission with which Isaiah was entrusted:

"Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

Isaiah, like others, was commissioned to a ministry concerned with failure. This was Jeremiah's experience; at the end of his ministry Paul had to say "all they which are in Asia be turned away from me"; and from the human standpoint the Lord's own earthly ministry was one of failure. God measures success by the rule of faithfulness, and that, sometimes, in the face of suffering and persecution. At Paul's commissioning he was to be told "how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake" (Acts ix. 16). Indeed this would appear to be the lot of the people of God during the present dispensation, for Paul tells Timothy:

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Tim. iii. 12).

Yet the ministry of failure and suffering, the ministry of faithfulness, is not fruitless. The outcome may be long delayed, but the fulfillment of God's purpose is certain. Isaiah enquired of the Lord "Lord, how long?", and the reply was given:

"Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof" (Isa. vi. 11-13).

The 'failure' to which Isaiah was commissioned would be complete; but in God's own time the seed which Isaiah would sow would bring forth fruit to the glory of God.

The man God calls must see the need, it may be before, or after the call, but the need must be seen and realized. So also he must 'see' God and perceive His holiness and glory: this will have the effect of making the man realize his sinfulness and insufficiency. But with the response to the holiness and glory of God will come forgiveness and enablement, and so the call can be, and must be, answered. To whatever else the call and commission may be, it will be to faithfulness in spite of all else.

May we all, with a true vision of God in Christ say with Isaiah: "Here am I; send me".

No.10. Jeremiah. **pp. 50 - 55**

The call of Jeremiah is specifically dated as being "in the thirteenth year" of king Josiah's reign. The historical background of the call and ministry of this prophet is thus more easily determined than is the case of some others whom God called.

We are told in II Chron. xxxiv. 1-3 that "Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign", and that "in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father" (verse 3): and "in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places". In the eighteenth year of his reign a tremendous and tragic discovery was made: Hilkiah the priest "found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses" (14). The book was taken to the young king and read to him. "And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes" (19). Not only did Josiah 'rend his clothes', he acted upon the words of the law, as the chapter goes on to show. So Jeremiah began his ministry against a background of reformation conducted by a young, but godly king.

Consider for a moment the tragedy of this history: the book of the law of the Lord had been lost *in the house of the Lord*. In the very place where it should have been made known, the book of the law had been 'misplaced'. What a tragedy! Yet it is a greater tragedy than the situation today? The Book of God is derided and abused in the house of God. The Bible is acclaimed as being important, yet its teaching is explained away and ignored. Sometimes, even, where it is acknowledged to be the Word of God, its teaching, where it is not expedient, is not followed. In Josiah's day the book of the law was rediscovered, and acted upon. Will this be the case with the Bible, in our day? It sometimes makes demands upon us we are not prepared to follow.

In the year following the commencement of Josiah's reformation the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah (Jer. i. 4). The father of Josiah, Amon, had been an evil king, but the

son “received the love of the truth” and acted upon it. Then the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah. It seems there was no burning bush, no vision of the Lord high and lifted up, no vision comparable to that of Ezekiel; there was no massive demonstration of Jehovah’s holiness. Nevertheless Jeremiah was clearly acutely aware of God’s holiness as chapter ii. shows. Was he a rare character who had no need of a *special* manifestation of God’s holiness? Is that what underlies verse 5?

“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee prophet unto the nations” (Jer. i. 5).

I set thee apart, I hallowed thee. Jeremiah experienced considerable distress because of false prophets, and it was, he says, “because of the Lord, and because of the words of His holiness”. Jeremiah, like others God called, had a very clear concept of the holiness of God, in his case, because of the holiness of His words. It would therefore seem that the manifestation of God’s holiness came to Jeremiah through the newly found “word of the law of the Lord”. If our view of God is ‘too small’, perhaps it is because we do not sufficiently heed the holiness of His Word.

Jeremiah was sanctified to be a prophet *before* he came forth out of the womb. There are three others named in Scripture in similar terms: John the Baptist, Luke i. 13-15, Paul, Galatians i. 15-16, and Samson, Judges xiii. 3-7. John was to be filled with the Holy Spirit “*from* his mother’s womb”, similarly Samson was to be a Nazarite “from the womb”. Paul was “*separated* from his mother’s womb”, which perhaps means rather more than the obvious. The word, *aphorizo*, is used in Luke vi. 22:

“Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you for the Son of man’s sake.”

In the majority of its occurrences it has this significance of separation *to God*. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, was *separated* from his mother’s womb, Jeremiah was *sanctified*, and his calling was to be a “prophet unto the nations”. Like Paul, this part of Jeremiah’s calling seems to have particular reference to the latter part of his ministry, see chapters xlvi. to li. Much of his work concerned, to use Paul’s phrase, “the hope of Israel”, but he was commissioned ‘a prophet unto the nations’.

Like others God called, Jeremiah was aware of his own inadequacy, and in response to his call he says “Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child”, perhaps better, “a youth”. We do not know how old Jeremiah was, and it is more likely the significance of the expression on his lips was “I am inexperienced”. Moses, as we have seen, found it difficult to express himself, and Paul was accused of speech which was “contemptible”, or of no account. Yet such men God deigned to use to His glory, perhaps even using their disability to add to His glory. It is not always, if ever, that God calls the most able and most confident to His service, although we may be tempted to appoint such. Jeremiah was assured of God’s enablement (Jer. i. 7) “Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee”. Then he was given a confirmatory sign: “Then the Lord put forth His hand, and touched my mouth. And the

Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth”. Unless the Lord puts the words into the mouth of the speaker, the most eloquent discourse is in vain.

Frequently we feel that when a man is called of God, his ministry will be all success and glory, but as with Isaiah, so it was with Jeremiah: he was warned of difficulties and opposition, and given a ministry of condemnation:

“See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.”

His ministry was not to be totally negative, there would be the positive aspect also. Seldom is the one God called left totally without encouragement, though it may be only small, for no God commissioned mission is ever really fruitless.

Jeremiah had other experiences common to those God calls. He experienced opposition from those who ought to have been giving him encouragement and support:

“Therefore thus saith the Lord of the men of Anathoth, that seek thy life, saying, Prophecy not in the name of the Lord, that thou die not by our hand” (Jer. xi. 21).

From the very first verse of the book we learn that there were priests at Anathoth, and it would seem that Jeremiah was opposed by relatives and friends, who were also those whose prime concern should have been with the Word of God and with His Law. This is confirmed in chapter xii. 6:

“For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.”

Those who should have been his support dealt ‘treacherously’ with him; they spoke ‘fair words’ to him: “I agree entirely with what you say, but”, “your ministry is faithful, but”. The result of this opposition was that there were times when his ministry seemed too much for him as he makes clear in chapter xv. 10-18. In verse 10 he complains that his ministry is causing strife and discord. He refers in verse 16 to the finding of the book of the law:

“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer. xv. 16).

He had avidly read the Word of the Lord, and it had been the source of supreme joy to him; in consequence:

“I sat not in the assembly of the mockers (merry-makers), nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of Thy hand: for Thou hast filled me with indignation” (xv. 17).

He could not rejoice with the ‘merry-makers’, for he was full of indignation at their rejection of that which had filled his heart with the joy of the Lord, and in verse 18 he goes on to say that his despondency is perpetually like an incurable and painful wound, for it seemed as though Jehovah was deceiving him.

But his God did not leave him without encouragement, and His Word to His despondent prophet was:

“If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before Me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them” (xv. 19).

If Jeremiah ‘returns’ from his despair to the Lord, the Lord would strengthen and reinforce him; but as to those who had opposed him, he was not to return to them. If there was to be reconciliation it must be on the grounds of their return to him.

At one time the situation had been so bad that Jeremiah goes so far as to say that “Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed” (xx. 7). Indeed the opposition was such at one point that he says:

“Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name” (xx. 9).

But his ‘I will not’ was countered by his ‘I could not’, for he continues:

“But His Word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (xx. 9).

Jeremiah’s suffering in the service of God led him, like Job, to curse the day wherein he was born (xx. 14-18). At the same time he has this consolation:

“But the Lord is with me as a mighty terrible One: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten” (xx. 11).

Perhaps in the days in which we live, when the enemy is so very active in opposing the work of those God has called, we need to remember with Jeremiah “the Lord is with me”, not perhaps, in the present dispensation as a “mighty terrible One”, but certainly as the God “Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us”; and that power is ‘exceeding great’, “according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ”.

No.11. Ezekiel.
pp. 76 - 80

Ezekiel's ministry commenced 'in the thirtieth year' we are told, but no point of reference is immediately given: it is not stated as the thirtieth year of a certain king's reign, nor of the captivity. We are told also that this thirtieth year coincided with "the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity". Twenty-nine years before this date the book of the law of the Lord had been found in the Temple, and the great Passover had been held by Josiah. The nation had been given a tremendous opportunity: the Law had been brought before them, by a king who was obedient to it; but as a nation it had no effect upon them. Now the judgment has commenced and the captivity begun. Ezekiel is called to prophesy against a background of judgment, and in prospect of judgment.

It was at this time, Ezekiel tells us, "the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God" (i. 1). Were these visions in which the prophet *saw* God, or were they visions inspired by God? *The Companion Bible* note at this point suggests they were *from* God, and as we read the accounts in chapters i. and x. it seems clear that this is the case:

"This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (i. 28).

What Ezekiel saw was not the representation of the glory of Jehovah; it was the representation *of the likeness* of His glory. This is emphasized throughout: verse 5 alone, speaks of "the likeness of four living creatures", and they appeared *like* a man. As the account is read, there is given to us the impression of a man seeking to describe the indescribable. It is tremendously impressive and awe-inspiring. If the mere representation of the likeness of the glory of God is so indescribably impressive and awesome, what can the actual glory be like? And how totally unbearable would be a direct vision of God Himself! Perhaps Ezekiel, more than any other whom God called, was aware of the holiness and majesty and glory of Jehovah.

We have drawn attention to the similes in verse 5, and similar comparisons persist throughout the passage. Verse 13 speaks of "the *likeness* of the living creatures, their *appearance* was *like* burning coals of fire, and *like* the *appearance* of lamps". Verse 14 continues "and the living creatures ran and returned as the *appearance* of a *flash* of lightning". Again in verse 22 "And the *likeness* of the firmament upon the heads of the living creatures *was as the colour* of terrible crystal", and who can describe "terrible crystal"? So it continues to the end of the chapter:

"And above the firmament that was over their heads was the *likeness* of a throne, as the *appearance* of a sapphire stone: and upon the *likeness* of the throne was the *likeness* as the *appearance* of a man upon it. And I saw *as the colour* of amber, as the *appearance* of fire round about within it, from the *appearance* of his loins even upward, and from the *appearance* of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the *appearance* of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the *appearance* of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the *appearance* of the brightness round about. This was the *appearance* of the *likeness* of the glory of the Lord" (i. 26-28).

So it is also with what Ezekiel heard:

“And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, *like* the noise of great waters, *as* the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, *as* the noise of an host” (i. 24).

Both the words ‘noise’ and ‘voice’ could be translated ‘sound’, for no articulate speech is referred to until verse 28.

Why should Ezekiel alone be given such a stupendous, awesome, terrifying experience of “the *appearance* of the *likeness* of the glory of the Lord”? Was it not because “the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house” (x. 18)? The glory had departed from the Temple, from the city and from the nation. It is surely significant that the departure of the glory of the Lord from the Temple concludes a second vision similar to the first. The glory may have departed from the earthly People; but the glory had not departed from the Almighty God. His glory was far, far greater than anything this rebel nation had ever experienced. Though the glory had so gone, the former vision ends with a message of hope, for there was “the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain” (i. 28). The rainbow was to be a perpetual reminder that God would never again totally destroy mankind, for He had a covenant with them, so here in this vision is the reminder of the covenant Jehovah had made with His People. The glory would return! Much of Ezekiel’s prophecies concern the time when that glory shall return in far greater measure than ever previously known by the Covenant People, and to a far greater and more magnificent Temple than the one from which the glory had departed.

The result of “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord” upon Ezekiel was “when I saw it, I fell upon my face” (i. 28). The Jehovah said to him:

“Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when He spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard Him that spake unto me” (ii. 1, 2).

“God’s calling, is God’s enabling.” This inexperienced ‘youth’ needed to be “set upon his feet” before he could hear. It is seldom indeed that God calls the inexperienced to His service; but when He does, He establishes that person that he may hear. In Ezekiel’s case it involved the Spirit entering into him: today all believers have the Holy Spirit, but those God calls particularly need ‘the spirit of wisdom and revelation’ which normally comes with growth in grace and with experience of the ways of God. Before they speak, like Ezekiel, they must hear God speak to them.

It is to be noted that Jehovah spoke to the prophet as “the son of man”, or son of Adam. Apart from Daniel, of whom the expression is used once (Dan. viii. 17), it is used only of Ezekiel apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. But there is a significant difference. When used of a man it lacks the definite article (“the”), but when used of Christ it has the article. Ezekiel was *a* son of Adam; Christ was *the* Son of Adam, the “second Man” and the “last Adam”. But in the books of Daniel and Ezekiel the expression signifies a human being, or natural descendant of Adam in contrast with a heavenly being. The

contrast is to be noted, for example, in Dan. viii. 16, 17. Here the heavenly being, the angel Gabriel is in contrast with, and speaking to “a son of Adam”. God *could* have chosen a heavenly being instead of Ezekiel: He chose a son of Adam to speak to the sons of Adam: they rejected the message. Much later God spoke to them through a “heavenly being”, His Son, and the sons of Adam still rejected His message, so that “they are without excuse”.

Ezekiel’s commission was, like others, to a ministry of failure, as is clear from chapter ii. 3 - iii. 11. Yet it was counterbalanced by the assurance of the ultimate fulfillment of God’s purpose for His People. Though there may be much to discourage the man God calls, always there must also be the assurance of the final triumph of God. The visions which came to the prophet came from God (*Elohim*), the Creator, and Ezekiel’s favourite name for God is Adonai Jehovah, Lord God as the A.V. translates it: Sovereign Lord Jehovah. God was and is God of all the earth, and though the nation might be held in captivity by their heathen enemies, *their* God was also the Sovereign Lord of all nations of the earth, of their enemies. Though for the time being He had discarded them for His purpose they were not beyond His influence and care.

In the course of his commissioning the “roll of a book” was spread before him (Ezekiel ii. 9, 10). He is told:

“Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the House of Israel” (iii. 1).

Just prior to this he had been told “Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee” (ii. 8). In Josiah’s “reformation” the book of the law of the Lord had been found in the Temple. The nation had refused to ‘eat’ it: they may have heard the words when they were read to them, but they did not ‘digest’ them. Ezekiel was to digest the words of the law, and those words were to be the basis of all he had to say. He says “then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness” (iii. 3). The ‘rebellious house’ had rejected the book of the law; Ezekiel delighted in it.

So it is with all whom God calls. The call of the prophets of old, and of all whom God has called, is related to historical facts to do with the current ‘people of God’, related to their needs and to their failures. Such men (and women) have a very clear concept of the holiness and greatness of God, and of their own unworthiness before Him. Such can only speak as they ‘hear’ though their words may be offensive to those who hear them, and so they are often commissioned to a ‘ministry of failure’, though proclaiming at the same time, as did the prophet Ezekiel the ultimate triumph and success of God. Fundamentally the man God calls is one who receives and delights in God’s Word.

No.12. Daniel.
pp. 91 - 95

So far as the record goes, there is no indication that Daniel ever received a specific call. Yet it would be a bold man who would suggest that Daniel was uncalled, and it would seem that he was one to whom the circumstances in which he found himself constituted his commission. The revelations he received were committed to him in visions, by angels and heavenly beings. It seems that unlike other prophets Jehovah did not speak to him directly. Israel was in a “lo ammi” period, and many of the nation, including Daniel, were in captivity in Babylon. This may account for the absence of any direct call, and for the absence of direct communication to him by the Lord.

Daniel is introduced to us as one of those brought to the king by Ashpenaz “of the children of Israel, and of the king’s seed, and of the princes” (Dan. i. 3). He was clearly one of the ‘ruling class’, and probably of the seed-royal, a more accurate rendering of this verse being “. . . . even (or both) of the king’s seed, and of the nobles”. In view of the godlessness of the kings and nobles at that time, it is remarkable not only that he was prepared to make a stand for the faith of his people, but that he had any faith for which to stand.

Here was a young lad, probably about sixteen years of age, in captivity, in a strange land, chosen for the king to be specially favoured and trained in “the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans” (i. 4), and appointed “a daily portion of the king’s meat” (i. 5). Daniel had much to lose, and there was every excuse for him to be restrained in the practice of his faith. Yet it is recorded in verse 8:

“But Daniel purpose in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank” (Dan. i. 8).

Daniel *made up his mind* that he would not defile himself with the king’s provision. It was no “spur of the moment” decision, he had considered the matter and concluded that there was only one course of action open to him. Having made up his mind he then spoke to the “prince of the eunuchs” who had charge of Daniel and his companions. It is clear that the prince of the eunuchs was scared of the king: “I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king” (i. 10). The king was no constitutional monarch, but a despotic dictator whose every whim must be obeyed. By his action Daniel not only risked his privileged position, but his very life. Yet because of the risk of defilement by the “king’s meat and drink”, he was prepared to risk his life. The meat was probably “killed with the blood”, and the Law forbade eating such: “ye shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast” (Lev. vii. 26), and had probably been “offered to idols”, again forbidden by the Law:

“For thou shalt worship no other gods: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a

whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, *and thou eat of his sacrifice*" (Exod. xxxiv. 14, 15).

Such a small thing about which to make such a fuss! But Daniel knew he would be "guilty by association" if, while professing to believe in Jehovah and to keep His covenant, he partook of "defiled" food and drink. Common sense is a very different thing from sanctified common sense. How easy it is to be very 'practical' and 'sensible', and thereby to be unspiritual and carnal. We need to be constantly on guard against such an attitude, for we are bidden to walk worthy of our Lord, not worthy of commendation by the world.

Paul assures us that "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (I.Cor.iv.2), and in the parable in Matt. xxv. 21, it is the faithful steward who is entrusted with greater responsibility. So it was for Daniel, "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams" (i. 17). Daniel's discernment in dreams led on to the events recorded in chapter ii. concerning Nebuchadnezzar's dream. When the situation was known to Daniel, the first thing he did was to go to his friends "that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon" (ii. 17, 18). The result was that "the secret was revealed unto Daniel in a night vision" (ii. 19). After, in the king's presence Daniel made it clear that the ability to interpret dreams was due to no skill of his own: "there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days" (ii. 28). How easily he could have made this an opportunity to advance himself in the king's eyes; yet he took it as an opportunity to bear witness to this pagan monarch of the power of his God.

When Nebuchadnezzar had his second dream, he acknowledged that a divine spirit was in Daniel. The Authorized Version translates "I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee" (iv. 8, 9, 18). The word translated "gods" is the Chaldee *elahin*, and is the equivalent of the Hebrew *elohim*, so that it is a moot point whether Nebuchadnezzar was referring to "gods" or to God. It must at least have been a step on the road to the acknowledgment in the verse 37 of this same chapter:

"Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all Whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase" (iv. 37)

Daniel's faithfulness is again emphasized in the interpretation of this second dream, for it spoke of God's judgment on the king. We have already pointed out that it was extremely dangerous to offend an absolute monarch such as Nebuchadnezzar. His faithfulness is again shown in the interpretation of the 'writing on the wall' (v. 22 ff.). Similarly when Darius was on the throne, and had issued the decree that none should "ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days" (vi. 4-end), as soon as Daniel heard the decree had been signed "he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (vi. 10). As a result of his faithfulness

this time, Daniel found himself cast into the den of lions; but God was with His servant and preserved him through the danger.

Because of his faithfulness, and through that faithfulness, God had used Daniel. Then, after about sixty eight years of faithfulness, came the first revelation to the prophet concerning his own people and the future in relation to Gentile rule, and its climax: three years later came the second vision. These prophecies troubled Daniel greatly (see vii. 28; viii. 27; x. 15-17). But what encouragement it must have been for Daniel to hear the words: “O man, greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong” (x. 19). To a man of Daniel’s outlook and faithfulness it must have meant far more than all the favour and promotion he had received from the various monarchs under whom he had served. Much, perhaps all, of the revelations he had received, were to be ‘shut up’ (viii. 26), or ‘shut up and sealed’ (xii. 4, 9). Only a truly faithful man could receive such messages and ‘shut them up’ and ‘seal them’. The burden would have been too great for any whose faithfulness had not stood the test.

His faithfulness also led him to identify himself completely with his people in the prayer and confession of chapter ix. 3-19. For some seventy one years he had been faithful to the Word of God, and it was “in the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus” that he came to an understanding of the significance of “the seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem”. Then it was that he identified himself with the nation in their rebellion against God. To know the mind and will of God does not always bring lightheartedness, and it may be that this accounts for the superficiality of so much Christian thinking in our day.

Perhaps we tend to overlook the faithfulness of Daniel in comparison with the prophecies given through him. Yet, surely, it was his faithfulness that called forth the words “O Daniel, a man greatly beloved” (x. 11). Daniel was faithful in spite of the pressures of circumstances; he was faithful in proclaiming the judgment of God, even to powerful, despotic monarchs; faithful in the face of threats to his person; faithful to the Word of God; faithful to his people. He was a rare character, even among the heroes of faith, for nothing is recorded against him.

O, that we might hear the words spoken of us: a man, or a woman, greatly beloved. To do so calls for faithfulness. It is comparatively easy to be faithful in one or two spheres: Daniel was faithful in all spheres. It is comparatively easy to be faithful in maintaining the truths of the Christian faith, it is not so easy to maintain that faithfulness by avoiding fellowship with those who deny those truths, for there are social pressures involved, and sometimes friendships.

No.13. Hosea.
pp. 192 - 196

Hosea, the man with a curious call! His ministry covered the last seventy years or so immediately before the fall of Samaria, the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel, frequently spoken of in his prophecies as “Ephraim”. Both from the historical books, and from the book of Hosea we learn of the terrible apostasy of the northern kingdom, so terrible in fact that there was no longer room for hope. Judah, the southern kingdom had also apostacized, but had not yet gone “beyond redemption point” and still there was hope for Judah.

“But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them” (Hosea i. 7).
“Ephraim compasseth Me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints” (xi. 12).

Nonetheless a harvest of judgment is appointed also for Judah.

“Also, O Judah, He hath set an harvest for thee” (vi. 11).

In the names of the prophet and his father, and in the names of his children and his symbolic acts is a summary of all Hosea had to say to Israel. For the moment we note but his name and that of his father. Hosea the son of Beeri:

Beeri: expounder.
Hosea: Jah is help; salvation.

What a significant thought is brought to our minds from these two names! The help of Jehovah, salvation is the ‘offspring’ of exposition. If only our ‘Christian’ leaders would learn that lesson!

Unlike some of those men God called, with Hosea we know without doubt when he was first called.

“The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms” (Hosea i. 2).

From verse 3 it seems clear that the children of whoredoms means something other than appears on the face of it, and all the children mentioned are those born to Hosea. This fact also helps us toward an understanding of what ‘a wife of whoredoms’ really means. For, although the prophets were often called upon to perform rather strange acts, it is highly improbable that God should ask one of his servants to take a wife who was actually an adulteress. Frequently in the O.T., and once at least in the New, adultery, whoredoms, etc., are used of departure from the worship of Jehovah, of idolatry. “Take unto thee a wife of idolatry”? Perhaps if anything this sounds even more unlikely than that the prophet should marry an adulteress, for nothing is more abominable in the sight of God than idolatry, or anything which denies His Deity: in this He is a Jealous God. Hence the seriousness of those who deny the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, for to deny

the Son is to deny the Father also (I John ii. 22, 23). *The Companion Bible* suggests the expression is a symbol, and as all the names are symbolic in the book, this is probably the case, and “a wife of whoredoms” signifies “a wife from the northern kingdom”. This does not necessarily mean that Gomer (whom Hosea married) was herself an idolatress, any more than when we say “Russians are communists”, for we know that not all of them are communists. Hosea was to take a wife *out of* the idolatrous northern kingdom.

“So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim.” Again the meaning of the names has great significance in the light of all that Hosea has to say:

- Gomer: completion, that is to say, Israel’s wickedness was complete, her cup of iniquity was full.
- Diblaim: a double cake of figs, *The Companion Bible* suggests this signifies “sensual pleasure”, or perhaps what we would call a materialistic society.

In due course their first child was born to Hosea and Gomer, and the Lord told them to call his name “Jezreel”:

“for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel” (i. 4).

Jehu had executed God’s judgment upon the house of Ahab, but his motives had not been pure: it had suited his own purpose and ambition, and he had been as idolatrous as Ahab. The nation as a whole had concurred with Jehu’s actions and ambitions and were thus equally guilty with him. As result the “blood of Jezreel” would be avenged in the scattering of the nation.

A second child was born, a daughter, and her name was to be Lo-ruhamah “for I will not more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away” (i. 6). In Rom. ix. 25 Paul interprets this as “not beloved”, and Peter as “not having obtained mercy” (I Pet. ii. 10). The third child born to the couple was named Lo-ammi: not my people. So, through the names of the people involved in the history of Hosea, the prophecy with which he was entrusted is progressively made known. The northern kingdom had forsaken their God, they had sought pleasure and material things rather than Jehovah, and through their idolatry their cup of iniquity was full. Now they were to be scattered among the nations, God had withdrawn His mercy from them, and they were to be disowned of Him. Then came a message of hope (i. 10 - ii. 1), the nation would be re-gathered, would again experience the mercy of God and be owned of Him, and, moreover, “the children of Judah and the children of Israel (shall) be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head” (i. 11).

Chapter iii. introduces us to what might be referred to as Hosea’s second call. He is to:

“Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine” (iii. 1).

This is usually taken to mean either that Gomer had “reverted to type”, or if she was not originally an adulteress she had become one. *The Companion Bible* says: “Not

Gomer again, but another; hence we must believe that Gomer had died; and that this was a second marriage with its own special significance". The notes also state that it is "referring to Israel's present condition in this present dispensation", and "an adulteress: an idolatress: and denotes only a woman of the northern tribes". However, this view hardly seems in accord with the statement in chapter ii. 2:

"Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight".
"For their mother hath played the harlot" (ii. 5).

The woman Hosea is now told to love, is one "beloved of her friend". The word translated "love" and "beloved" is, in both cases *ahab*: love a woman loved of her friend. Hosea was told to express the love he already had "*according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel*". The theme of Hosea's prophecy is that although the nation of Israel has been unfaithful to Jehovah, He will yet take her back. The words of Hosea to this woman are significant:

"Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee" (iii. 3).

Immediately Hosea continues "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, etc.". If therefore, Hosea is 'acting out' in his personal life the love of Jehovah for Israel, it would seem most likely that the "woman beloved of her friend" is in fact Gomer. Or are we to understand from this acted prophecy that Israel having turned from Jehovah to other gods, is to be rejected by Him, and replaced by Him by another nation equally idolatrous? Hosea's action is to be "according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel". Whether this interpretation of the facts is correct or not, it is clear from the whole of this book, as well as from other Scriptures that the adulterous nation of Israel is to be punished by Jehovah for her sins, and "after many days" will be restored, and will "fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days" (iii. 5).

Hosea says of the 'woman beloved of her friend', 'so I bought her', and the price he paid was that of a slave. Gomer, if it is she, had not only fallen into adultery, but had also become a slave needing redemption. How perfectly the picture fits Israel! But we must not be side-tracked whether the 'woman' was Gomer, or some other. The message of the lived-out lesson is that in spite of all Israel's unfaithfulness, Jehovah still loved them, and when they have been for 'many days' without king, prince, priest, asherah or idol, then when they return and seek Jehovah they shall become once more "My people", and 'beloved' or pitied. The importance of the message is underlined in that it was enacted in the life of the prophet, stressed in the symbolism of the names of the characters involved, and put to them plainly in the clearest of verbal terms. No one had any excuse for failing to understand the message of Hosea.

Hosea:	salvation.
Gomer:	the measure of iniquity was full.
Jezreel:	the consequent scattering.
Lo-ruhamah:	Israel had forfeited Jehovah's mercy.
Lo-ammi:	Israel's present condition..

But when they seek the Lord:

Ammi: their future position.

Ruhamah: pitied, perhaps we may say this is the new Christian name, for God's mercy will be once more fully extended to them when they accept their Messiah, the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Hosea, the man with a curious call! but a call which outlined and emphasized God's dealings with faithless Israel, until the time when "all Israel shall be saved". How great is God's faithfulness; "He cannot deny Himself", "if we are unbelieving, yet He abideth faithful".

No.14. Amos. pp. 226 - 230

Very little is known of this prophet, Amos. The whole of his known history is to be found in the book which bears his name. He was "among the herdmen of Tekoa" (i. 1). Tekoa was in Judah, and while Amos prophesied against Judah and the surrounding nations, the main thrust of his ministry was against Israel, the northern kingdom. It is clear that some of his prophecies were delivered in Israel itself, as is plain from Amaziah's words to him, "O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat thy bread, and prophesy there" (Amos vii. 12).

Who, or what, was Amos? Chapter i. 1 tells us he was a herdman. *The Companion Bible* note tells us this means "shepherd", the word being derived from a particular breed of sheep. In response to Amaziah, Amos says, "I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit" (vii. 14). Here the word translated "herdman" derives from a word for "ox", and hence could be rendered "cattleman". He was a *preparer* of sycomore fruit rather than a "gatherer": in order for the fruit to ripen properly, it had to be pinched at a certain stage of its growth, and this was part of the work undertaken by Amos. Amos, then was a shepherd, cattleman, and possibly also a ploughman and a tender of fruit. The inference is that he was what today might be termed a general farm labourer. He had no claim to high birth, as Isaiah and Jeremiah; he had no special preparation as Moses or Paul, nor was he marked out as specially righteous as Noah. In this case we are not even told the name of his father. We know where he was working when the Lord took him: "and the Lord took me as I followed the flock" (vii. 15). We know nothing of his birth, and we know nothing of his death. Did Amaziah succeed in driving him back to Judah where he died in obscurity? or did he remain in Israel and die in the earthquake he foretold? We simply do not know.

Amos was a 'nobody': yet the Lord took him, and used him. Yet by reason of his occupation the illustrations he uses are particularly vivid, and are taken from his country life. He speaks of the 'habitations (or better pastures) of the shepherd', and of threshing "Gilead with threshing instruments of iron" (i. 2, 3). In chapter ii. 13 he uses the

picture of a heavily laden cart; “as the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear” (iii. 12). Perhaps the best known of his illustrations is “the basket of summer fruit” (viii. 1, 2): ripe the fruit, ripe the time. As a countryman he would have been well acquainted with “that which may be known of God” in nature, “even His eternal power and Godhead”. Examples of this are to be found in chapter v. 8, “the seven stars and Orion that calleth for the waters of the sea”, and in the same chapter:

“Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it to you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light; As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him” (v. 18, 19).

Again, “will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he hath taken nothing?” (iii. 4), and verse 5 and 8 of the same chapter draw on the power of God in nature as illustrations, and there are other similar pictures from the same source. Chapter ix. 1-4 speak of Jehovah’s Godhead and holiness.

On the surface Amos was nothing, and had nothing to offer God by way of service; but God took him as he followed the flock. He was simply watching over them as they fed, not leading them. Perhaps in this is a hint of his character and personality. He was no leader of men; a humble, insignificant nobody.

Yet this man had the audacity, not only to prophesy against the king of Israel, but to do so at “the king’s chapel” or sanctuary (viii. 13). But if it was a genuine place of worship, was it “the *king’s* chapel”? There was a time when the temple at Jerusalem was known as “the House of the Lord”, but when the Jews turned from their God it became “your” house. *This* sanctuary was one of those established by Jeroboam, forever branded as “Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which caused Israel to sin” (the Jeroboam against whom Amos prophesied was a much later king, who reigned about the same time as Uzziah king of Judah).

In these studies we have taken into account the historical background, and the background to the ministry of Amos is summarized for us in II Kings xiv. 23-29. Jeroboam the son of Joash “did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin” (xiv. 24). But for all that he was a king of ‘might’ (28) and he ‘restored the coast of Israel’ (25). He was, therefore, in all probability, a very popular king. What hope of success was there then, for a nobody like Amos?

One can imagine the scorn with which Amaziah (the priest of Bethel, the king’s chapel) viewed Amos: “O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat thy bread, and prophesy there” (vii. 12). Some have suggested that the force of “thou seer” is “thou visionary”, for it seems unlikely that Amaziah recognized in Amos a true prophet: Amos was too insignificant for that according to Amaziah’s reckoning! To modernize this priest’s words, ‘clear off to Judah’. Did he also wish to imply that Amos was a mere mercenary, paid by the king of Israel to prophesy against Jeroboam? It seems

a likely inference from “there eat thy bread”, with the suggestion “prophesy there” that Amos should devote his attention to his own peoples’ failings.

“Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, God, prophesy unto My people Israel” (vii. 14, 15).

Amos admits his lowly origin, but the Lord called him, and he could do no other than obey. He was one of those of whom it might be said:

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are” (I Cor. i. 26-28).

But God took Amos and used the lowly experience of the countryman to provide simple but telling illustrations of His dealings with men. Amos prophesied for only a brief period: probably not more than two years (cf. i. 1), possibly for less. For a brief moment he shines in the purpose of God: and is gone. God took him; God used him; God used the knowledge of Himself Amos had gained in his daily life; God took him as he worked.

Whether high born, whether low born, whether well known or unknown, whether for a long or short period, the only thing that matters is that a man, or a woman, can say “the Lord took me as I followed my daily task”. In our own calling, most of us are called to go, not *from* our daily task, but *in* it. Most of our calling are just ordinary people, doing ordinary jobs. Someone has said “in our calling God has taken the lowest, and raised them to the highest”. It is well for us to remember this: Amos did! In effect he said “I was a nobody, I am a nobody: but the Lord called me: I could only obey”.

Perhaps one of the dangers of our calling, because it is so high and wonderful, is that we may, unconsciously, think God has chosen us and called us because we are *somebody*: if anything of this sort is true, it is more likely that He has chosen us because we are *nobodies*. The wise, the powerful, the nobly born are often too wise, too strong, too noble for the Lord to use them. The more clearly we recognize this, the more clearly we shall recognize our total dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ; and the more we recognize our total dependence on Him, the more He will be able to use us in His way, for His time, for His glory.

Our part, as we rejoice in the wonder of our high calling (which is *His*), is to get to know Him. As we get to know Him, in the fullness of His glory, and the fullness of His nature, so that in practice He becomes for us “All in all”, that will “keep us in our place”, and make us more usable in His service.

I was a nobody, I am a nobody; but God in the greatness of His great grace has chosen, called and accepted me in His Son, the Beloved.

The First Epistle of PETER

No.1. Chapter i. pp. 153 - 159

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia” (I Peter i. 1).

An apostle is one sent away by another. In the gospels we find the Lord Jesus instructing Peter for his role after Calvary. In Luke’s gospel our Lord Jesus tells Simon He has prayed for him that he might not fall to the attack of Satan:

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art *converted*, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke xxii. 31, 32).

What does it mean, “when thou art converted?” The phrase reminds us of God’s prophecy to Israel through Isaiah:

“Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and *convert*, and be healed” (Isa. vi. 10).

The warning to Israel although repeated in Matt. xiii. 15 finally found fulfillment in spiritual blindness for most at the end of Acts. This spiritual blindness will be lifted as foretold in Jer. xxxi. 33 “I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts”.

Peter and the elect remnant of Israel in Acts enjoyed a foretaste of the yet future days of Jer. xxxi. 31, in as much as their minds were opened to the truth. Thus we find Peter failing to believe or understand many of the statements of Christ and even denying Him, and all this before Pentecost, but after Pentecost he is prepared to brave the Sanhedrin and is a changed man:

“Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Whom ye crucified, Whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand before you whole now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John they marveled” (Acts iv. 8-13).

It appears then that Peter has experienced the conversion referred to by our Lord in Luke xxii. and now in these two epistles to the dispersed Jews of Asia Minor he is writing to strengthen his brethren, having now wisdom and spiritual understanding supplied by the promised additional Comforter or Holy Spirit.

In the last chapter of John’s gospel the risen Lord appears to Peter and the following dialogue is recorded:

“Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord: Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed (provide pasture for) My lambs (the immature flock). He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed (shepherd) My sheep (the adult flock). He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Jesus saith unto him, Feed My sheep (pasture)” (John xxi. 15-17).

Here is a second appointment to apostleship. Peter was to care for the young and old in the faith, giving them pasture. How else can we interpret this figure of pasture other than to let it represent the Word of God. The figure of sheep and a shepherd for those days was so apposite. The sheep knew the voice of their shepherd and trusted him. He led them every day to where they would find the food for their well being and growth. He was at hand at all times to protect them from enemies.

The figure of pasture for sheep, finding its antitype in the Word of God for Christians, cannot be stressed enough. Our Lord repulsing Satan by the O.T. stated “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew iv. 4). How long should we live without physical food, and yet many Christians starve their spiritual life by inadequate feeding on the Word.

We shall find therefore in Peter’s epistles a strong plea for the Word of God.

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (i. 2-).

Before we examine this statement let us state what is the foreknowledge of God. This appears to be a supernatural ability of God to see into the future, how His creation will behave and respond to His love, grace, discipline, etc. Heaven’s created spirits including Satan, and mankind have been given a freedom of choice for thought and action. Adam and Eve were not puppets but were left free agents in the garden of Eden. The tree of knowledge of good and evil they were commanded not to touch [(???) **EAT!**] but nevertheless were left to obey or disobey. Their progeny, subject to their consciences have been left with the same freedom. Where the eternal purpose of God has been endangered God has overruled this freedom.

Coming back to our text, what God has done with certain people or nations is to elect or choose those for His purposes who He foreknew would respond and implement His plans for the ages. In the case of Peter he was elected or chosen by God for the ministry to the people of Israel:

“When they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me (Paul) 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 might in me (Paul) towards the Gentiles]” (Gal. ii. 7, 8).

In every mention of Peter in the Gospels we can see the preparation of this man for the leading post he was to hold among the Israelites. Especially is this to be seen in Matt. xvi.:

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: Some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shalt be loosed in heaven” (Matt. xvi. 13-19).

It might be safe to say here that the kingdom of heaven is that future administration when the Lord Jesus will return and reign during the millennium from Jerusalem, the actual kingdom will extend to a limited surrounding area. The nations of the world will be subject to Christ. If Israel had accepted their King at the first advent of Christ the kingdom would have been established then. Now it is postponed to the not too distant future. Peter was put in charge of his brethren during what would have been a short waiting period for the return of their King (see Acts iii. 19-21).

Notice Christ emphasizing that God Himself had opened Peter’s eyes to Christ’s Messiahship to which God’s Son adds “I also say unto thee”. Now what Christ says to Peter is an amplification of Peter’s confession. Christ was going to make entry into His church of whatever calling, a confession of faith in Himself as He instructed Paul to write in Rom. x. 9:

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

When the Greek grammar is applied to Christ’s words quoted from Matt. xvi. it is this confession and not on Peter that Christ’s church would be founded. Christ may well have made play on *petros* a stone, moveable, but which had once been part of *petra* an unmoveable rock which had always symbolized Christ.

Here then was an important position that Peter was to occupy and one that God had ordained, knowing that he would respond and fill the part to which he was elected.

“Elect through sanctification of the Spirit” (still i. 2-).

Sanctification has a primary sense of being made holy by being separated unto God through His Son, His Word and His Holy Spirit. Only God is Holy but we can become so by God’s ordained way of manifesting Himself by these three, His Son, His Word and His Holy Spirit.

Our blessed Lord prayed to His Father in John xvii. 17-21:

“*Sanctify* them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I *sanctify* Myself, that they also might be *sanctified* through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may

be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.”

Here is the basis for a powerful unity for service and ministry and it was under these measures of grace that Peter was elected to serve his brethren. It is under the same terms of powerful enabling that God calls us to preach and manifest the riches of His Word, leading to such fullness of knowledge of God. His ways and purposes that we are prepared for a reality of unity with Him and the knowledge to praise Him in sincerity.

“Unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (i. -2-).

The only occurrence in the New Testament of the phrase “sprinkling of the blood” is in Heb. xii. 24:

“Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

This quotation links the task of Peter, to which he was to be obedient, with preparing his people for the establishment of the new covenant which as we have previously said was foretold in Jer. xxxi. 33.

“Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (i. -2-).

Those who heard Peter’s words and accepted them had grace or free undeserved favour added to them indeed. The picture in Acts is exciting.

“And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and *great grace* was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the apostles’ feet! and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need” (Acts iv. 33-35).

Coming now to verse 3 Peter commences his epistle to his flock with the same phrase as Paul does to his calling in Eph. i. 3:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The word blessed in both cases is *eulogetos* (our eulogy) “let us speak well of”. Here is an exhortation to praise God and speak well of Him to the world for the peculiar grace He had accorded to us in Christ. For Peter’s brethren it was being born again to the hope of living again in resurrection, the thought of which is repeated in verse 23:

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”

For us all it is the acceptance and merging by us of the written and living Word that our rebirth is accomplished as was also expressed in John i. 14, 15.

The living hope mentioned in verse 4 is now described more particularly:

“To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (i. 4, 5).

We know that during the first century A.D. the Jewish Christians underwent great trials and opposition from many quarters. Peter, true to instructions from Christ offers encouragement and hope to his flock. “Kept” in verse 5 has the sense of security by a garrison. God would be at their back at all times:

“When they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers, take ye no thought now or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say” (Luke xii. 11, 12).

Whenever the millennial kingdom would be established they could rely on God to watch over them and establish them in their inheritance on earth. The power and administration of the kingdom is reserved in heaven in the person of the King but His kingdom then will be on earth. It is not to be confused with the Heavenly Jerusalem which is reserved in heaven and will descend on the new earth at the end of the millennium. Peter makes another reference to this inheritance at the end of his letter:

“An when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (I Pet. v. 4).

No.2. Chapter i. (continued). pp. 176 - 180

Verses 6 and 7 make reference to the trials and sufferings that beset his flock with a view to strengthening them to endure. A brief consideration of such suffering and why it was necessary might be helpful for there are many references to suffering preceding glory. The word ‘suffer’ from its parts means to bear under or endure under some adversity. When we view the Bible as a whole and the basic purpose of so much of its teaching we find that its goal is that ultimately we might find a unity of outlook with God, complete trust in Him, with conviction of His righteousness, that He knows best in everything, and because knowledge of Him has taught us this, we willingly obey Him in everything and willingly give Him all the glory.

The book of Revelation testifies that the overcomers will glorify God in the knowledge of the truth:

“And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast sing Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty, *just and true are Thy ways* Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee O Lord, and glorify Thy name?” (Rev. xv. 2, 3).

With this goal in view God ordained and found it necessary that those who were to obtain in resurrection positions of glory and responsibility in His eternal purpose, He

permitted such to be exposed to trials and testing of their own flesh, the opposition of rebellious men and the attacks of Satan and his agents. God elected or chose such men because with His supernatural foreknowledge He knew they would make the required response being tempered and prepared by their sufferings to be overcomers.

That man might be assured that this path to glory was the will of God He ordained that His Son should be the first to tread that way:

“Who (Christ) in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet *learned* He obedience by the things He suffered. And being made perfect (having been brought to the consummate goal of His earthly life), He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him” (Heb. v. 7-9).

“For it became Him, for Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the *Captain* of their salvation perfect through suffering” (Heb. ii. 10).

We have given a paraphrase of ‘being made perfect’. Perfect is an easy word to misunderstand. Its parts mean “thoroughly to do”. Complete for the purpose might be a good alternative. All the adjectives in the contexts concerned, have to do with the mind. Consider the saying of Christ:

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. v. 48).

We should have the same attitude to the world as God, a loving concern for others for their true good in harmony with the will of God.

All this may seem a long digression from verses 6 and 7 but many may still be where Peter was before he was converted, who, when our Lord foretold His sufferings and rejection rebuked his Lord and said “Be it far from Thee Lord, this shall not be unto Thee” (Matt. xvi. 22). What has been written is an attempt to show that God finds a severe training of the mind necessary for a place in His presence. We shall have the cloak of Christ’s righteousness but the knowledge of God is also necessary.

We pass on now to verses 8 and 9.

“Whom having not seen, ye love; in Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (i. 8, 9).

Before we consider their goal and end of their faith “the salvation of your soul” let us look at the remarkable superlative words that Peter uses “ye rejoice with joy unspeakable”. Would that our worship and praise of God today could be described in these terms. They were believers mostly in Asia Minor and outside Palestine who had never met Christ. Their great advantage over us was in the first case nearness of time to the actual life and sacrifice of our Saviour but also that they had the gifts of the Holy Spirit to buttress their faith. These included gifts of healing, tongues and most of all knowledge, that is they needed not any to teach them the hidden riches of the O.T. with all its prophecies and law pointing to Christ.

With such an aid to their faith and no hurdle of imperfect translations, it was no wonder they could respond so effectively, and even with the warning by Peter of tribulations and trials to be endured for the gospel, they could still rejoice with ecstatic joy knowing that their God would reward their good response to such testing.

“. . . . even the salvation of your souls” (i. -9).

Soul is a word very often misunderstood. The general usage implies the whole of a man including his character and mind. It is the complete me. Our physical body has been described as the tabernacle or covering of the identity of each man. We shall find this phrase waiting for us in II Pet. i. 13, 14:

“Knowing that I must shortly put off this my tabernacle.”

The alternative meanings for *soteria* (salvation, i. 9) given in a concordance are safety and soundness. They indicate the quality of physical and spiritual life of a *believer*. The forgiveness of sins and being saved thereby from death is *not* involved in the word. Paul in Philippians is helpful:

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in (energizes) you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. ii. 12, 13).

The course of wholesome growth of our soul (the complete ‘me’) in every respect will be directed and energized by God in Christ. In contrast we could not by works secure the forgiveness of our sins.

As Peter recommends God’s gospel of salvation to His brethren he is impelled to glorify its origin and importance both in earth and in heaven:

“The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and enquired about this salvation: they enquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ (Messiah) and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the gifts of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things in which angels long to look” (I Pet. i. 10-12, R.S.V.).

Paul in writing to the Romans also stresses the work of the O.T. prophets:

“. . . . the gospel of God, which He promised afore by His prophets in the holy Scriptures” (Rom. i. 2, 3).

Christ also stressed this to His disciples this foundation of the gospel:

“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke xxiv. 27).

Over and above this evidence of the importance of the O.T. as preparing the world for the Saviour and the One Mediator between it and God, the reference to the actual writers of the prophecies studying what they had written proves they did not write these things

out of their own imagination but were directly inspired by God through His Holy Spirit. Peter is going to say as much in his second epistle:

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. 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” (II Pet. i. 20, 21).

The surprising statement by Peter that the angels desired to “stoop down or peer into” these prophecies is another indication of their origin in God. When one is aware of the grievous attacks on the inerrancy of the O.T. today both in and out of Christendom one can see how God foresaw it would be necessary to give a rational backing to the truth of His Word to those who in faith gave it an honest examination.

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (I Pet. i. 13).

Rehearse in your memory, be clear in your understanding of all the things you have learnt in arriving at your faith. Then be watchful (sober), (an insistent and repeated exhortation to those expecting the personal arrival on earth of the Lord Jesus Christ as King), and have an expectation with the conviction of faith (hope) to the end, for the grace you will receive at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

This grace is the first of several references to rewards awaiting those overcomers, ‘suffering, then glory’ being a recurring theme.

“As obedient children (children of obedience), not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts (desires) in your ignorance” (i. 14).

Paul at the commencement of his letter to the Romans refers to the same theme, “obedience to the faith among all nations” (Rom. i. 5). The great thought in both ministries is: having been rescued from the power of Satan and this world; and been brought into the Kingdom of God; they should live lives in harmony with, and in obedience to the object of their new faith. For our own calling there is a similar need to let the knowledge we receive by the Holy Spirit find an acknowledgment in our daily living: both actions, thoughts and words.

No.3. Chapter i. (continued).
pp. 234 - 237

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

Here is another injunction to take on a character that will prepare for unity and harmony with God. In Lev. xi. 44 Israel were told to avoid certain beasts and birds for food so that all Israel would be separate or sanctified from the other nations. Israel were being prepared to be a kingdom of priests to disciple the world and because of this there was to be an element of difference and distinction in that nation. Peter quotes the conclusion of Lev. xi. 4:

“Be ye holy as I am holy.”

The same principle was taught by our Lord to those He was to send into the world:

“I have given them Thy Word: and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world as I am not of the world, I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the Truth” (John xvii. 14-19).

Peter calls to his brethren to let their conversation (an inclusive word for life and habits) be in harmony with their message to the world which was to be obviously distinct and separate from the ways of the world. In the world but *not of* the world was the key note.

“And if ye call on the Father, Who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear” (i. 17).

Fear here is indeed the emotion of terror such as the disciples experienced when they thought they saw a spirit. The law is a terror to the criminal not the innocent. Even so for believers in those days with supernatural gifts there was a greater responsibility on them than on us in these days of grace. Ananias and Sapphira perished at the word of Peter for thinking they could deceive the Holy Spirit. “And great fear came upon all the church” (Acts v. 11). Notice in I Pet. i. 17 it is the work of men that will be judged for reward, their salvation is assured. The word sojourning would remind them of their time in the wilderness when God tested them to find out their response to His call.

“For as much 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; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (i. 18, 19).

The firstborn males of Israel were still typically redeemed when they were 12 years old by the payment of 5 shekels (Christ fulfilled the law in Matt. ii. 42). This

redemption looks back to their redemption from the bondage of Egypt by the typical Passover lamb, which was examined for any blemish before being sacrificed on the night of the first Passover. Peter reminds his brethren that Christ the antitype had fulfilled this rite by the outpouring of His precious blood.

Peter emphasizes to his brethren the great cost to the Father and His beloved Son of His plan of salvation. Paul in Hebrews utters a similar warning to those who sinned willfully after receiving knowledge of the truth:

“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith He was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Heb. x. 28, 29).

“Who only was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last days” (I Pet. i. 20).

Here is another reminder that God’s blueprint for the salvation and reconciliation of man was amazingly prepared before He had created Adam and his environment! The Son of God appeared on earth in the body that had been prepared for Him for the role of Saviour and Redeemer at the absolute moment in time that God by the O.T. through the prophets had testified.

“Who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God” (i. 21).

The resurrection of Christ is the touchstone God has used to prove to man the truth of His Word. God sent His Son. The Son spoke and claimed He spoke the Words of the Father. Christ’s fully witnessed resurrection by God must be sufficient endorsement to many by God of the words of His Son. The endorsement by God of His Son’s words *glorified* the Son quite apart from His re-assumption of glory at the Father’s right hand at ascension. Thus the whole tenor of verse 21 is to remind his brethren that by the witness of Christ’s resurrection, their foundation for the hope of eternal life and a robe of righteousness had been extended from Christ Who they had seen, to God the Father Who they had not seen.

“Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit into unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (i. 22, 23).

By hearing the word of God preached, Peter’s brethren to whom he was writing, had believed the message of salvation and had been born again. John in his first epistles writes:

“Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for His seed remaineth (abideth) in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God” (I John iii. 9).

Peter is exhorting his followers to let the abiding Spirit of Christ have full rein in their lives, to let no part of the old nature regain a hold which would bring again impurity into their souls. Where the Spirit of Christ rules their lives, their love towards their brethren will be in harmony with the will of God. There will be no element of mixed or selfish intentions in that love, neither will it be lukewarm.

“For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (i. 24, 25).

We have come to the end of the first chapter of Peter’s first epistle, not that there was any break here in the original. What a deep and powerful letter it is. When we think Peter after the crucifixion turning back to his old trade saying “I go a fishing” (John.xxi.3), and yet here carrying out the words of his Master “feed My sheep!” Peter was almost following in the steps of the prophet Isaiah who he quotes in verse 24. Isaiah (chapter xl.) writes “Comfort ye comfort My people”. Then in verses 3-5 the coming of the glory of the Lord is announced. “The voice said Cry.” The words Isaiah was to cry were to the effect that while the days of man passed quickly as the grass of the field the word of the Lord endured for ever. Peter catches up these mighty words of the prophet Isaiah adding for his readers “the fulfillment of them” “And this is the word which the gospel is preached unto you”.

No.4. Chapter ii. pp. 237 - 240

“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (I Pet. ii. 1-3).

Peter now emphasizes the need to grow and the kind of food that these new believers required. Peter refers to them as newborn babes having in mind their being born of God. Our Lord stressed the need of a believer coming to the kingdom of heaven having cast aside the accretion and guile of the world and having again the pure innocent mind of a child ready to receive and embrace the attitudes and virtues of the gospel. Peter lists some of the likely evils that they needed to discard: malice (a vicious disposition); guile (“subtle” from a Latin word, *sub* = under and *tela* = a web. This is a device much used by Satan and his dupes to trap and deceive. It can assume the form of misuse of the Word to teach error to the ignorant and unwary).

In contrast to the list of evil qualities they were to turn to the basic and foundation truths of the Word of God as a proper response to the gracious Pentecostal gift or gifts they had received as believers, referred to by Peter as a foretaste of greater blessings. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews also uses the figure of milk (Heb. v. 13) but his exhortation is not to stay on a milk diet but proceed to meat and solids. So many evangelist efforts today provide the milk but either fail to see the need to pass on to meat

and solids or more often are not equipped with knowledge of the Word to give out anything deeper.

“Coming to the Lord, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, yet also as lively (living) stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (ii. 4, 5).

Here is envisaged a unity of ministry, with Christ as the foundation, a corner stone to which every part of the house depends for its position and support. Even as this corner stone is precious in the eyes of God the Father so they were precious to the Father (verse.7). It is strange how the ministries of Peter and Paul find close resemblance in their different callings. “In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. ii. 21).

“Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded” (ii. 6).

Where someone proves to us to our dismay that our actions or judgments are wrong we are confounded and ashamed. If all our trust and obedience is in the Son of God and His Word, we are assured we shall never be confounded or ashamed. In contrast to God’s support for His believer He has taken a different line with those who rely on their own intelligence and wisdom. God has said through Paul “He will have no flesh to glory in His presence” (I Cor. i. 29). Thus we find:

“God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to *confound* the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to *confound* the things that are mighty” (I.Cor.i. 27,28),

and in regard to the Jewish leaders who were not of the elect remnant, God blinded their eyes so that being disobedient to the Word, Christ was not seen as the corner stone and to them acted as a stumbling stone (the first stone marking the position and orientation of a building may often for days be left in isolation in the grass over which the unwary may trip) or rock of offence.

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the Word, being disobedient: where unto also they were appointed” (I Pet. ii. 7, 8).

There are one or two points which need to be remembered when thinking about these verses. Some may wonder at the blinding by God of so many of Israel and especially their leaders. Here one must remember the gross wickedness of their forefathers, the obsession of those at that time with the letter rather than the spirit of the law, their own righteousness rather than the righteousness of God. Furthermore Paul disclosed that God desired the Gentiles to have a period of time to respond to the gospel and His grace in their own right independent of Israel (see Rom. xi. 32). Again Peter’s readers needed some explanation for the way events were shaping. What is clear to us today may have been found puzzling at that time. Obedience to the Word of God crops up here and in many contexts and we today need continually knowledge and then practical acknowledgment.

“But ye are a chosen generation (race), a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people: that ye should show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (ii. 9, 10).

The word generation is better translated race, the nation of Israel, Hebrews. This takes the descriptive context back to Jacob and Egypt. They were a holy nation, separated unto God by laws concerning food, behaviour and above all worship of the one God. The word peculiar from Latin means private possession though today the meaning has changed. The old meaning however well describes Israel. God had special regard for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and He chose Jacob's progeny to bring the praise and knowledge of Himself to the world. Peter rehearses for his brethren their privilege and honour in being called out by God from other nations, and by laws, giving them a distinctive national character all with a view to world service for God.

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (ii. 11).

Strangers and pilgrims harks back to their time as strangers in Egypt and pilgrims in the wilderness seeking the promised land. When we are on a journey and the important and urgent thing is to get from A to B we cut the fripperies with which we dally on a pleasure cruise. Fleshly lusts or desires inhibit the free working of the Holy Spirit with us. As Paul wrote “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh: but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Rom. viii. 5). Allowing an undue intrusion of questionable reading or viewing will lead to barrenness of prayer and unprofitable Bible study. The two do not mix. So also for other pursuits that give undue attention to the flesh. There is a legitimate area for necessary recreation which can take many forms to keep the mind and body fit. The new life in Christ has by no means a ‘kill joy’ element, quite the reverse.

The Use and Abuse of Joel's Prophecy.

No.1. Background.

pp. 186 - 191

Introduction.

In these writings we shall assume that the reader has no knowledge of Joel's prophecy and little, if any knowledge of the rest of the O.T. Thus we crave the patience of our more knowledgeable readers but in this day and age, when so few are acquainted with God's Word, this must be the right approach.

One may ask why deal with the prophecy of Joel? Is it a book of such great importance for the new Christian? Are there not other, more important, parts of the Bible that deserve people's time and attention? Answers to these questions may vary but Peter's quotation on the Day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 16-21) from Joel has thrown this prophecy into the limelight. Sadly, however, few know the context of Peter's quotation and this writing is an endeavour to look at Joel's prophecy as a whole and in its O.T. setting. When we have done that then we will look at Peter's usage of the prophecy.

Where is Joel's prophecy?

Towards the end of the O.T. is a group of relatively small books called the Minor Prophets. These start with Hosea and then comes Joel, Amos, Obadiah and so on till we get to the last book of the O.T., Malachi. In all, there are twelve Minor Prophets and they make interesting reading. Now -- before studying Joel we will need to read it and this will not take long. There are only 73 verses and these are split into three chapters and to read the whole book takes less than ten minutes.

Most of the book of Joel is written in Hebrew poetry and if you have read the King James Authorized Version (A.V.) or the Revised Version (R.V.) or J. N. Darby's translation (J.N.D.) this will have escaped you for these do not attempt to put the English into any type of poetry or verse form. However The Revised Standard Version (R.S.V.), Moffatt (Mft.), the New English Bible (N.E.B.) & the New International Version (N.I.V.) do their best to translate the Hebrew poetry into some equivalent English form.

It is probably a good idea to read Joel's prophecy in two different translations and the A.V. & the N.I.V. go well together. When you first read this prophecy the meaning of some of the verses will be obvious—others will be perplexing! In certain cases it is clear that the words should be taken literally and in others figuratively but in some cases it is hard to tell. However before *studying* any book of the Bible it is a good idea to *read* it through—if possible two or three times. Thus before proceeding please read Joel's prophecy through two or three times. This will take about twenty minutes.

Who was Joel?

Before starting on a detailed study of the book it may be useful to know something about the person God inspired to write it. Also it may be useful to know where he wrote it, when he wrote it and what was the situation (political, economic, sociological as well as religious) at the time he wrote. Also it may help to know why God inspired the book to be written. If any of these (Who? When? Where? What? Why?) are important and if any are essential to our understanding of the book then the relevant details will be abundantly clear, but if any are of no importance then the details of such will be lacking.

So! Who was Joel? Well -- nothing is known of him other than what is contained in this prophecy. Some think he might have been a priest but in Joel i. 13 the expression “ye priests” implies he is not one of them. Thus all we know is that he is the son of Pethuel, Joel i. 1, and we know nothing more about this Pethuel. In fact Pethuel is a very unusual name and this name occurs nowhere else in the Bible. The Greek translation of the O.T., the Septuagint, puts the name as Bethuel.

Joel was relatively a common name, there are twelve different Joels in the O.T., and “son of Pethuel” is added to the name so as to distinguish this Joel from any other. Thus the people of his day would know which Joel it was who had given out this “word of the Lord” but it is not important for us to know this. For us to understand what is written we need know nothing about the inspired writer but we have been given his name.

The name Joel is an interesting name and like most Hebrew names it has a meaning. We shall see that it is a most apt name for the prophet.

To try and describe fully the great God Who surpasses our comprehension is impossible but in an attempt to let us have a glimpse of His magnificence He uses different names, titles and descriptions of Himself. Two of the most common in the O.T. are *Elohim* and *Jehovah*.

Elohim is the word used for God with respect to creation and *Jehovah* is the word used for God with respect to the covenants He made with His people. *Elohim* is the great, all powerful Creator in covenant relation with mankind, His creatures. Now *El*, the almighty God, is a contraction of *Elohim*, and *Jah* is a contraction of *Jehovah* and is used to depict *Jehovah* with respect to the special covenant of salvation.

Thus the name Joel is a mixture of these two names of God and means “Jehovah is God”. Another interesting name is Elijah which has these two names in reverse order and means “My God is Jehovah”. Two most appropriate names for two of God’s prophets.

When was the Prophecy of Joel written?

Of the twelve Minor Prophets six are dated and six are not dated. Joel’s prophecy is undated but a clue to the date can be obtained by “internal evidence”, that is noting what

is contained in the book and comparing it with what is written elsewhere in the O.T. However this can never be accurate and different opinions are possible.

Joel's prophecy may be undated because *when* the prophecy was written and the *situation* at that time might not have been important. It may be undated because the burden of the book is in the future, the time of the end, "the Day of the Lord". Thus the prophecy took the people of Joel's day out of their present time and situation and focused their mind on future events.

We could go into a lot of detail dealing with the different interpretations of the internal evidence for the dating of the book but this does not seem profitable at this point. It is perhaps worth noting that there are three main ideas:

- (1) Some think it was written very early either:
 - (a) in the days of Athaliah's usurpation (B.C.787-782), or
 - (b) in the days of King Jehoash (B.C.781-744), or
 - (c) in the days of King Uzziah (B.C.701-649).
- (2) Some think it was written in the last days of the kingdom of Judah, just before the Temple was destroyed and the nation taken to Babylon (B.C.488-477).
- (3) Some think it was written in the days after the nation returned to the land following the Babylonian captivity (B.C.444-345, probably B.C.400).

If the dating was important it would have been recorded for us (see Hosea i. 1 and Amos i. 1) but as it was not we will say no more at this point. The above just demonstrates that when there is not clear guidance from God men soon disagree!

With respect to the above dates we have followed the chronology given by Dr. E. W. Bullinger in *The Companion Bible*. The dating of the kings and the prophets is not easy and scholars do disagree but this is not the subject before us now and the dating in *The Companion Bible* is more than sufficient for our study of Joel.

Where was Joel?

The nation of the Jews were united under their first three kings for most of the 120 years. Saul, David and Solomon each reigned for 40 years but at Solomon's death the nation split into two. The northern kingdom of ten tribes was called Israel and its capital was Samaria. The southern kingdom of two tribes was called Judah and Jerusalem was its capital. From chapter iii. and verses 1, 6, 8, 18, 19, 20 we are left in no doubt that Joel was concerned with Judah and, from ii. 32 and iii. 1, 6, 16, 17, 20, Jerusalem. In chapter i. 9 and 13, and in chapter ii. 17 the priesthood is indicated and in i. 9, 13 and ii. 4 the offerings are mentioned. Thus Joel seems to be right in the centre of things dealing with events at the Temple of Jerusalem, the capital of Judah.

Although Israel was originally the name of the northern kingdom only, the term came to be used of both parts. Similarly, the expression "the people of Israel" could refer to either those of the northern kingdom or both kingdoms. The context would decide the

precise meaning and Joel iii. 2, 16 uses the expression the “people of Israel” to refer to both.

What was the situation?

Being unable to give an exact date of writing means we are unable to give, with certainty, the exact situation but we will at this state narrow the dating down.

We feel that the early datings are unlikely to be correct as neither Israel nor Judah were in captivity or under the threat of captivity. If they had been then Joel iii. 1 would be inappropriate. If Joel completed his prophecy in those early days “there is no historical background for Joel’s burning words concerning Judah and the great ‘Day of the Lord’.” (*The Companion Bible*, p.1224).

Two possible datings are now left—either just before Judah was taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar or after their return from that captivity. Bearing in mind the great plea to “repent” the former of these seems the most probable. Thus the occasion of Joel’s prophecy was an exceptionally severe plague of locusts possibly preceded by a drought and followed by a bush fire in the days just prior to Judah being taken into captivity. The case for this view will be strengthened when we look at the book in detail but whatever different views we may hold we will all agree that this prophecy was given to the people of Judah when they were low; drought, locusts and fire had destroyed their crops and the thought of captivity, either pending or just finished, was in their mind.

Why was it written?

The prophet Hosea was sent to the *guilty* Israel, the northern kingdom. The prophet Joel was sent to Judah, the *guilty* southern kingdom and his words relate to the end of the kingdom of Judah and impending captivity. It contains several calls for the nation to change their ways (i. 13, 14 & ii. 12) and exhorts them to turn to the Lord. If they would do this then God would not only be merciful (ii. 12-14) but He would also bestow upon them gifts and give signs (ii. 18-32). He would also judge the nations (iii. 12). Thus Joel’s prophecy was given to encourage Judah to repent of their wicked ways.

If we are correct in placing this book in the years just prior to the Babylonian captivity (B.C.488-487) then the books of the Kings and Chronicles will be a help. These are the ‘history’ books of the O.T. and II Kings xxiv. & xxv. and II Chron. xxxvi. cover the closing years of the nation of Judah and if you read these three chapters you will see that the kingdom of Judah was displeasing the Lord and the kings of Judah did “that which was evil”. No doubt many were caught up in this evil and so Joel was sent to call them to repent and to change their ways saying that, if they would do so and turn to the Lord, He would be merciful and bestow great blessings upon them. This is the burden of Joel’s prophecy. Did the people respond? Sadly history tells us that they did not and judgment resulted in a period of captivity in Babylon. Why didn’t the people respond? Didn’t Joel put the case thoroughly enough? Was not his message clear enough? Well, we will find

out the answers to these later but before proceeding, read Joel again and the following outline of Joel's Prophecy may be of help.

i. 1	“The Word of the Lord”
i. 2, 3	Call to hear
i. 4-13	Judgments inflicted on Judah
	i. 4-7 New wine cut off
	i. 8-13 Harvest spoilt
i. 14 - ii. 17	Call to repent
	i. 14 - ii. 14 Judah a desolation
	ii. 15-17 The gathering of Judah
ii. 18 - iii. 21-	Judgments removed from Judah
	ii. 18 The Lord will be jealous
	ii. 19 The Lord will answer
	ii. 20 I will remove
	ii. 21-27 I will restore
	ii. 28, 29 I will pour out My Spirit
	ii. 30-32 I will show wonders
	iii. 1 I will restore
	iii. 2- I will gather the nations
	iii. -2-8 I will plead
	iii. 9-17 The Gentile harvest
	iii. 18 New wine restored
	iii. 19-21- Egypt and Sodom a desolation
iii. -21	“The Lord dwelleth in Zion”

No.2. i. 1 - 13.
pp. 211 - 220

On page 1224 of *The Companion Bible* Dr. E. W. Bullinger gives his structure for this book:

- i. 1. The Title.
- A | i. 2, 3. Call to hear.
- B | i. 4-13. Judgments. Inflicted.
- A | i. 14 - ii. 17. Call to repent.
- B | ii. 18 - iii. 21. Judgments. Removed.

On page 262 of volume XXV of *The Berean Expositor* Mr. C. H. Welch suggests that the following may of help to the reader:

- A | a | i. 1-7. New wine cut off.
- b | i. 8-13. Israel's harvest spoiled.
- B | i. 14 - ii. 14. Israel a desolation.
- C | ii. 15-20. The gathering of Israel.
- D | ii. 21 - iii. 1. I will restore.
- C | iii. 2. The gathering of nations.
- D | iii. 2-8. I will plead.
- A | b | iii. 9-17. Gentiles harvest.
- a | iii. 18. New wine restored.
- B | iii. 19-21. Egypt and Edom a desolation.

The chapter divisions in our Bibles, and indeed the verses were put in by man and they do make study and reference much, much easier. However there were no such divisions in the original inspired writings and there are places where the break is inappropriate and spoils the flow of the message. In order to compare similar sentiments and to contrast differing ones the use of structures is a great aid—breaking down and cutting across the rigidity of chapters and verses. Different writers often present different structures and we will produce a detailed one at the end of our study of Joel but in the meantime the reader may care to note for himself passages which repeat and emphasize similar thoughts and ideas and those which directly contrast with one another.

Whichever of the above two structures we choose to follow we see that there is a change at the end of verse 13. Thus in this study it would seem to be appropriate to consider the first thirteen verses of the opening chapter of Joel's prophecy.

Joel i. 1. The Title. The Word of the Lord.

“The Word of the Lord (Jehovah) that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.”

This opening verse show that what Joel is about to say is not his word but the Lord’s. Joel can be described as one of those holy men of God who “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Pet. i. 21). This then fixes our attitude. What we have before us is a message from the Lord and so we must treat it as such. Being respectful and studious—and exercising humility over those parts which we cannot understand will be far more profitable than dismissing such as ‘impossible’ or ‘fantastic’ or

The Hebrew for ‘word’ in Joel i. 1 is *dabar* and does not necessarily mean a spoken word. It can mean ‘matter’ or ‘subject’ in a more general sense. Thus although nearly all translations open with the expression “The word of the Lord’ Moffatt has “The message of the Eternal” (Moffatt always has Eternal to translate *Jehovah*). Here Joel is stressing that the source of his message, his revelation is not himself but the Lord and this is reinforced in Joel ii. 12 with “saith the Lord” (A.V.); “declares the Lord” (N.I. V.).

“The word of the Lord” is also the opening of other prophecies. See, for example, the first verses of Hosea, Micah and Zephaniah. Their message, too, was also a message from the Lord and expressions like “thus saith the Lord” must occur well over four hundred times throughout the O.T. clearly indicating and emphasizing, time and time again, that what is contained therein is “The word of the Lord”, “The message of the Eternal”.

Joel i. 2, 3. The Call to Hear.

Joel, having received a revelation from the Lord, promptly tells others about it but he does not stop there. He encourages and exhorts them not only to tell their children the message but also wants them to ensure that their children will tell their children and that they will, in their turn, tell their children. Thus the importance of the message is emphasized by telling the old to ensure that, as well as their children and grandchildren knowing it, their great grandchildren should hear it also.

With an appeal to the old men and the past, “Has such a thing happened in your days, or in the days of your father?” (R.S.V.). Joel now emphasizes the seriousness of the events. This swarm of locusts, and its effect, may have brought into the minds of the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem the words of Exod. x. 3-15 when the land of Egypt had been infested by such a plague because Pharaoh would not allow Moses and the people to worship the Lord. Then Pharaoh was sinning against the Lord, disobeying His commands and so judgment. Was this plague, the one which preceded this message of Joel, the result of the people of Judah sinning against and disobeying the Lord? Certainly if it is written in the days just prior to the Babylonian exile various verses in II Kings xxiv. & xxv. and II Chron. xxxvi. record that the kings “did evil in the sight of the Lord”.

The word for old men (verse 2) is *zaqen* which is translated elders in i. 14 and ii. 16. Apparently either is a possible translation but here, in verses 2 and 3, Joel is encouraging the people to look as far into the future as they can and as far back into the past as is possible. Thus “old men”, rather than “elders”, seems more appropriate. Mind you! the majority of the “elders” would be “old men” so perhaps we are splitting hairs!!!

Joel i. 4 - 13. Judgments. Inflicted.

Joel i. 4.

Earlier we mentioned that nearly all of this prophecy is in Hebrew poetry so Joel, having made the claim that his message is from the Lord and having exhorted his people to listen, now launches into that message and he opens with a very short but very sharp punch which would certainly make his listeners sit up. The English of Joel i. 4 in the A.V. is very graphic but in the Hebrew there are but twelve words and Dr. Bullinger suggests the following translation of this opening of Joel’s message:

“Gnawer’s remnant, Swarmer eats:
Swarmer’s remnant, Devourer eats:
Devourer’s remnant, Consumer eats.”

Such a terrible overwhelming destruction would certainly gain the attention of any listener and reader but how difficult it is to translate such expressions into easily understood English. The A.V. has:

“That which the palmerworm hath left
hath the locust eaten:
and that which the locust hath left
hath the cankerworm eaten:
and that which the cankerworm has left
hath the caterpillar eaten.”

As there are over 90 types of locust and as there are ten different Hebrew words used for locust the exact interpretation of this verse is difficult. *The Companion Bible* points out that palmerworm is *gazam*, the gnawer and is the first of four different stages of the locust. In England we might describe this as the hairy caterpillar. Next, Joel i. 4, is locust = ‘*arbeth*’; the swarmer. This is the imago or adult stage. Cankerworm is *yehek*, the devourer, and caterpillar is *hasil*, the consumer and possibly the larva stage.

J. N. Darby has the same translation as the A.V. but adds notes: “probably different species of locusts or different stages in growth, as ‘grub’, ‘creeper’, ‘feeder’.” He goes on to suggest that the cankerworm, literally “the feeder”, may be a species of locust in the stage just before it arrives in the perfect, imago state and in which it devours much vegetation.

Thankfully not living in a land affected by these creatures one is at a loss to unravel the details of this verse but so too, or so it appears, are the translators of the N.I.V.:

“What the locust has left
the great locusts have eaten:
What the great locusts have left
the young locusts have eaten:
What the young locusts have left
other locusts have eaten.”

The translators, however, add a note saying “the precise meaning of the four Hebrew words used here for locusts is uncertain”, but what is certain is that *everything* has been eaten! There is nothing left! That is Joel’s point and although we might have problems fully appreciating the finer details of this verse we can most surely “get the message”. In poetic style Joel brings home the fact that the plague of locusts has destroyed everything!

“What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten. What the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten” (R.S.V.).	“What the lopping locust left, the swarming locust ate. What the swarming locust left, the leaping locust ate. and what the leaping locust left, the devouring locust ate.” (Moffatt).
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Moffatt, certainly, with “lopping locust left” and “leaping locust left” perhaps comes nearest to a poetic representation of this verse.

We have spent some time on this verse because Joel reveals the main purpose of his prophecy through a double reference to locusts. The first, in Joel i. 4, would cause further depression to his already dejected listeners who already knew the consequences of the plague and would not welcome being reminded. His next reference, however, should gladden their hearts and lift the clouds of despondency:

“And I will *restore* to you the years that the locust have eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, My great army which I sent among you” (Joel ii. 25, A.V.)

Thus the theme of Joel, as it is in all the other prophets, is the restoration of the peoples of Israel and Judah into one kingdom under the Kingship of the Lord.

Joel i. 5 - 13.

Having dealt with the cause of the destruction in verse 4, Joel now proceeds to describe that destruction, picking out several particular items. The structure of this section enables us to high-light these.

- i. 5a. PEOPLE. Call to awake and howl.
- i. 5b-7. REASON. Vine laid waste. Fig made bare.
- i. 8. LAND. Call to lament.
- i. 9, 10. REASON. Offerings are cut off.
- i. 11a. PEOPLE. Call to be ashamed and howl.
- i. 11b, 12. REASON. Harvest perished. Trees withered.
- i. 13a. LAND. Call to lament.
- i. 13b. REASON. Offerings withheld.

Joel i. 5. The drunkards are told to awake and “all ye drinkers of wine” are told to howl. In those days “all ye drinkers of wine” would include nearly everyone—the only general exception being those who chose to be Nazarites (Numb. vi. 2-21). Apart from fresh milk there was little else to drink. The water could not always be relied upon to be free of infection and it could not be stored for long. The fermentation process necessary for the production of wine does allow the product to be stored for quite some time afterwards. The apparent conflict between “new wine” (A.V.) and “sweet wine” (R.S.V.) is only apparent. New wine would always be sweet for the longer the fermentation lasts, the less sweet the wine and the greater its alcoholic content. Thus sweet, low alcoholic wines would be popular and one can be sure that Joel is addressing practically the whole of the population. Also, sadly, some who took the Nazarite vow, which involved abstention from wine, did not keep it, Amos ii. 11, 12. So we can safely say that this somewhat derisory description.

“Wake up you tipplers and weep,
wail, every swiller of wine” (Moffatt),

is embracing the whole of Judah and is apt for a people exhorted to repent of their wrong and turn again to God. These people are told to awake and howl because of “the new wine: for it is cut off from your mouth”. This would indicate that the plague had arrived just before the grape harvest! What a bitter blow! Just when they were thinking of picking the grapes destruction!

Joel i. 6. Next the people are told to awake and howl because a nation has come upon God’s land—note the “My land”. The word for nation is *goy* and here it seems that the locusts are called a nation just as ants are called a “people” in Prov. xxx. 25. However some assert that this word *goy*, which is translated nation or Gentiles, cannot refer to locusts and thus interpret the four descriptions of Joel i. 4 as the four Gentile superpowers which were to rule over this land until our Lord Jesus Christ’s time on earth, and beyond. That Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan. ii. 27-45) refers to these nations of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome is agreed but to read these nations into Joel i. 4 is perhaps forcing a prophetic and allegorical interpretation onto a past and literal event. Certainly this opening chapter is a very “agricultural” section and

the natural interpretation of both verses 4 and 6 allows them to stay in their obvious context of events of that day.

Again some may say that the description given in this verse is not fitting for locusts but “teeth of a lion” and “fangs of a lioness” (N.I.V.) are most appropriate for creatures that are so destructive. R. A. Cole mentions that an Arab saying credits the locust with the “chest of a lion” maybe because of its appearance but possibly because of its destructiveness. Thus although Joel is a prophecy which undoubtedly deals with apocalyptic and allegorical symbols in its later passages, we are perhaps wiser in not reading such into the opening verses.

Joel i. 7. Verses 6 and 7 are vivid, poetic descriptions of the ravagings of a swarm of locusts. Thus there is much reason for the people to howl. When the creatures have eaten all the leaves then they attack the bark. Everything that the people of Judah relied upon for sustenance gone! The vine was laid waste and stripped of its bark. The fig tree likewise. The corn or grain was destroyed and the olive tree mutilated and unable to produce its oil (verse 10). Throughout the whole of this section again note the Lord referring to My land, My vine, My fig tree. He is the Creator of all things (John i. 3) and as such all belong to Him.

Joel i. 8. In the third line of the structure for Joel i. 5-13 there is the call for the land to lament. This, according to *The Companion Bible*, is because the word for lament in verse 8 is feminine and agrees with and qualifies the word for land in verse 6 and how that land is to lament! Think of the havoc these creatures have rent on it! It is terrible and certainly it would be hard for Joel to find a stronger figure to describe this lamentation than the one he has used. “A virgin girded with sackcloth” is perhaps the supreme symbol of grief depicting, as it does, a girl whose fiancé has been killed just before their wedding. In Joel’s day, in the land of Judah, an engagement was as binding as a wedding and this was still the case during N.T. times as we see from Joseph’s predicament over Mary (Matt. i. 18, 19). Thus for a young girl to lose her fiancé well, I am sure we can all appreciate the situation. It was to guard against such terrible grief as this the Lord, through Moses and the law, did not allow engaged men to serve in the military (see Deut. xx. 7 and xxiv. 5).

Joel i. 9. The land is called to lament because it has been unable to yield the “meat offering” and the “drink offering”. The “meat” offering is better called the *meal* offering or gift offering for it does not require blood, that is the killing of an animal. Animal sacrifices were to secure admittance into God’s presence but the meal offering was a gift to secure favour. It is fully described in Lev. ii. which mentions fine flour and oil as the main ingredients but green ears of corn can be used. Bearing in mind Joel i. 10 we see that such offerings were now impossible.

The drink offering is mentioned in conjunction with the meal offering in Lev.xxiii.13 and in Exod. xxix. 40 it is linked with the sacrifice of the lamb. Numb. xv. 3-10 connects it with several different offerings. Thus it was quite important. In Hebrew the drink offering is *neseh* which is derived from *nasah* which means to pour out and this,

literally, was what was done with the drink offering. It was poured out onto the ground (Gen. xxxv. 14). Again, bearing in mind that this drink offering was either wine or a mixture of wine & oil and bearing in mind that both of these ingredients had been destroyed by the locusts (Joel i. 7), we see that it was impossible for these people to offer these sacrifices. At such times of drought and plague the people could easily have offered the animal sacrifices. At such times when there was no vegetation to feed the flocks they would probably have gladly offered them, but often the animal sacrifices needed to be accompanied by the meal and drink offerings and that was now impossible (Exod. xxix. 40, 41).

The priests, the Lord's ministers, are told to mourn and when one appreciates fully their connection with the offerings then the absence of such would cause them great concern. Those who claim that the expression "The Lord's ministers" indicates that Joel was written after the Babylonian exile because it is a "late" expression, fail to note that similar expressions occur elsewhere in the books known to have been written before that exile (Jer. xxxiii. 21). Also the sentiments of ministering go back much earlier and are found in such passages as Exod. xxx. 20 and Numb. iii. 6.

Joel i. 10. The priests are told to mourn and the land lament because of the absence of the offerings. The land was unable to provide the oil and flour and corn but its predicament was worse than that. "The field is *wasted*, the land mourneth: for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth" (A.V.).

The word land in verse 10 is *adamah* and is elsewhere translated soil or ground. It is not the word used in verses 2, 6 and 14 which is *eretz* and which means land or country. Thus the N.I.V.'s translation of this verse is more enlightening:

"The fields are ruined, the ground is dried up;
the grain is destroyed,
the new wine is dried up,
the oil fails."

Such is the lament of the land!

Joel i. 11. Now certain of the people are called to be ashamed and to howl and, bearing in mind an agricultural community, those described in this verse would be most of the population.

"Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen" (A.V.) is not the clearest rendering.

"Despair you farmers—wail, you vine growers" (N.I.V.).
"The farmer is downcast—the vinedressers wails" (Moffatt),

are perhaps better. Certainly the farmers have much to despair about, the vine growers much to wail about. The rest of verse 11 and verse 12 give the sad story.

Joel i. 12. Verses 10 to 12 are indeed serious and to ensure that the listener's and reader's attention is fully grasped they are full of assonance, that is the words used have a

In our next study we shall consider the next section which starts with the call for Judah to repent.

Reflections on ISAIAH.

No.8. (xlix. 13 - lii. 12).

The call to hearken and to awake
leading to Israel's restoration (li. & lii.).

pp. 6 - 11

We have seen in Isa. 1. that the Messiah is spoken of as having the awakened ear, and now we are to consider an extension of this essential feature of true discipleship as it is applied to Israel. Chapters li. and lii. are occupied with this theme, as may be seen at a glance:

li. 1. Hearken unto Me	li. 9. Awake, awake
li. 4. Hearken unto Me	li. 17. Awake, awake
li. 7. Hearken unto Me	lii. 1. Awake, awake;

but it will take more than a glance to acquaint ourselves with the argument that develops. Let us endeavour to follow these great exhortations. The first call to hearken is addressed to "Ye that follow after righteousness" (Isa. li. 1). While the last is addressed to "Ye that know righteousness" (Isa. li. 7). In the first passage, the people are 'followers' and 'seekers' and they are directed to the great covenant basis of all their hopes:

"Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn look unto Abraham your father I called him alone" (Isa. li. 1, 2).

The word translated 'alone' *echad* signifies 'oneness' or 'unity'. There was a 'oneness' about Abraham that was sadly lacking in his descendants, but which must be emulated as they 'hearken' as Abraham did and 'believed in the Lord' and so was counted 'righteous'.

Israel's restoration hinges upon this:

"For the Lord shall comfort Zion . . . He will make her wilderness like Eden" (Isa. li. 3).

The second call to 'hearken' is addressed by the Lord to "My people" and "My nation"; and there He declares "My righteousness is near; My salvation is gone forth", and in contrast with the very heaven that shall 'vanish away like smoke' and the earth itself that shall 'wax old like a garment' this salvation shall be 'for ever', and this righteousness shall 'not be abolished' (Isa. li. 4-6).

Similar teaching is found in the third section (Isa. li. 7, 8) where they that "know righteousness" are called upon to 'fear not the reproach of men' by reason of this same eternal quality of righteousness and salvation.

The intimate association of 'righteousness' with 'salvation' is a blessed anticipation of the full presentation of that doctrine which is the glory of the epistle to the Romans.

We now turn to the threefold call to ‘awake’. The first, Isa. li. 9 is addressed to the Lord, the second and third are addressed to Israel (Isa. li. 17; lii. 1).

The call to Awake (li. 9, li. 17, lii. 1, 2).

- A1 | li. 9. Awake, awake. Call to the Lord.
Remembrance of “ancient days”.
- A2 | li. 17. Awake, awake. Call to the people.
(different form of the word than that used in li. 9 and lii. 1).
Israel’s present position.
- A3 | lii. 1. Awake, awake. Call to Israel.
Reference to “henceforth”.

In the first of these calls, there is a very definite reference to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and it must be kept in mind by the reader that the whole story of the exodus is to be re-enacted on a grander scale. The plagues that fell upon Pharaoh, his people and his land find their complement in the plagues that are recorded in the book of the Revelation. The two witnesses, Moses and Aaron, are represented at the time of the end (Rev. xi.) and the song of Moses is mingled with the song of the Lamb (Rev. xv. 3).

Consequently, we find Israel fortifying its faith, by saying:

“Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?” (Isa. li. 9, 10).

Egypt is mentioned by name so many times in the prophecy of Isaiah that the use of “Rahab” and “the dragon” here in the passage before us must have some fuller significance. Rahab is taken, in Psa. lxxxvii. 4 to represent Egypt. The dragon also could well represent Egypt, the word so translated referring in all probability to the crocodile. But he who sees no further than Egypt in this opening call of Isa. li., considers but ‘things that are seen’. The word *Rahab* occurs in the proverb quoted of the Egyptians in Isa. xxx. 7 “Their *strength* is to sit still”, “The *insolent* they sit still”, as it may be rendered and in Job ix. 13 and xxvi. 12 the word signifies the ‘proud’. The opposition of a Pharaoh, a Sennacherib, a Nebuchadnezzar are but recurring symbols of the great antagonist named in the Scripture “That ancient serpent who is called the Devil and Satan”.

The final deliverance of Israel is shadowed forth by the exodus from Egypt in the burden of the prophecy of Isaiah, and fills the Apocalypse with song. This section of Isaiah may be set before the eyes as follows:

Isaiah li. 9 - 16.

- A | 9. | a | Awake
 b | put on strength
 a | Awake
 b | as in ancient days
- B | 10-16. Ancient days and their prophecy of the future. |
D | 10, 11. | c | “dried the sea?” ref. to Egypt
 d | Future restoration
 “shall return”
- E | 12. I even I am HE
D | 15, 16. | c | “divided the sea”
 d | Future restoration
 “Thou art My people”

The words of verse 11 are similar to those found in Isa. xxxv. 10 showing most clearly the prophetic intention to link Israel’s deliverance from Egypt with their future restoration.

The believer is now directed to consider another reason for confidence in the Lord. Not only is there the blessed history of the exodus, there is behind it all the overwhelming creative record of Genesis:

“I even I am HE (the pronouns are emphatic here) that comforteth you” (Isa. li. 12),

and the corollary is therefore:

- (1) Fear not a man that shall die.
- (2) Forget not the Lord thy Maker.

Isaiah enlarges upon the mighty power of Israel’s Deliverer by drawing attention to the wonder of creation:

“That hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth” (Isa. li. 13).

We have too much regard for the inspired Scriptures to think that the many references they contain to this wonderful ‘stretching forth’ of the heavens is merely a piece of oratory, and the following scheme may be useful as a guide to the interested student:

- A | Isa. xli. 22. Idolatry.
B | Isa. xlii. 5; xlv. 24; xlv. 12; li. 13. Israel’s deliverance.
A | Jer. x. 12. Idolatry (note verse 9 is in Chaldee not Hebrew).
B | Jer. xl. 15. Babylon’s overthrow.

The reader will remember that both Isaiah (xxxiv. 11) and Jeremiah (iv. 23) make direct reference to Gen. i. 2 when the earth was “without form and void”. The “stretched out heavens” of these same prophecies refer to the ‘firmament’ of Gen. i. 6, where the margin instructs the reader that the Hebrew word used means ‘expansion’. We

already have been taken back to primeval rebellion, in the reference to Rahab and the Dragon, and the accumulative testimony of these passages teaches us that behind or beneath all the movement of man both in his fall and restoration, is the greater conflict and ultimate victory of Divine right over Satanic wrong. Neither the fall and redemption of man, the deliverance and restoration of Israel, nor the high glory of the Church are ends in themselves, they are links in a chain, factors in a scheme, means to a greater and more glorious end than has yet been perceived by man.

The same Hebrew word is used in each of the three calls to ‘awake’ that we are considering, but the form of the verb in Isa. li. 17 differs from that used in the other two passages. *The Companion Bible* suggests the words ‘rouse thee’ for this form of the verb. Here Israel is called upon to consider her ways. They had drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of fury, desolation and destruction had come upon them, and their comforters were few. To such the Lord now returns in mercy saying:

“Behold I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of My fury; thou shalt no more drink it again: but I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee” (Isa. li. 22, 23).

To this the prophet Jeremiah referred, when he said:

“For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them” (Jer. xxv. 15-26).

This prophecy relates to the period following the end of the seventy years of Israel’s desolation (Jer. xxv. 11, 12), after which Babylon was to be punished.

“Sheshach” is a cryptic reference to Babel. “B” is the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and “Sh” is the second letter from the end of the same alphabet. The name of this system of cryptic writing is athbash, a name which is made up of the first and last letters “A” and “Th”, and the second and last but one letters “B” and “Sh”.

In Jer. li. 41 Sheshach and Babylon are named together. There is more in this curious method of naming the enemy than mere human artifice. Just as Rahab and the Dragon represented Egypt, but more than Egypt, just as the references to the exodus refer to a greater than Pharaoh and a greater deliverance, so the fall of the visible Babylon and its king is but a faint picture of the greater fall of Satan and his evil system.

The third call to awake (Isa. lii. 1) is addressed to Zion, delivered, cleansed, clothed and ready for her espousals, and for interest this call is placed in juxtaposition with that of Isa. xlvii. 1.

To Israel the prophet cried:

“Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; from henceforth there shall *no more* come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the *dust*; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion” (Isa. lii. 1, 2).

To Babylon the prophet cried:

“Come down, and sit in the *dust*, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for thou shalt *no more* be called tender and delicate thou shalt *no more* be called, The lady of kingdoms” (Isa. xlvii. 1-5).

No.9. (xlix. 13 - lii. 12).
The “good tidings” of lii. 7 completes the section
opened by the “good tidings” of xl. 9.
pp. 26 - 31

On either side of that section of Isaiah which deals with ‘waking’ and ‘hearing’ we have a reference to the fact that Israel had been ‘sold’, thus:

A | Isa. xlix. 13; l. 1. Sing . . . sold
A | Isa. lii. 3-9. Sold . . . sing

Coming to Isa. lii. 3-12 we find it is associated with that which goes before by the recurring word ‘comfort’:

A1 | li. 9, 10. Awake, awake
B1 | li. 11-16. I, even I, am He that comforteth you.
A2 | li. 17-19-. Awake, awake
B2 | li. -19-23. By whom shall I comfort thee?
A3 | lii. 1, 2. Awake, awake
B3 | lii. 3-12. The Lord hath comforteth His people.

In Isa. l. 1 the Lord asked “which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you?” as though He had been reduced to selling His children by bankruptcy. This however was not the case. No ‘creditor’ had paid money at the sale of Israel. “Behold, for your iniquities ye have sold yourselves.” This being the case, redeeming love can now interpose:

“Ye have sold yourselves for nought: and ye shall be redeemed without money”! (lii. 3).

To be sold is to become a captive, a slave, consequently when the Lord said to Israel “Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion” He referred to this deliverance “without money”.

The prophet follows this reference to deliverance from a bondage into which Israel had been as it were ‘sold’, by speaking of Egypt and the Assyrian:

“My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause” (Isa. lii. 4).

The Companion Bible has a note here which reads:

The Assyrian. This was “another king” (Acts vii. 18), the first of a new dynasty, the “new king” of Exod. i. 8, who (of course) “knew not Joseph”, “oppressed them”. This refers to Exod. i., and has nothing to do with the later Assyrian carrying away.

If we were *certain* of the Pharaoh of the oppression, we could be *certain* that the above note was correct or incorrect. If we turn however to Appendix No.37 of *The Companion Bible*, we shall find cause to suspend judgment here:

“It was intended to include a list of the Pharaohs mentioned in Genesis and Exodus, and an elaborate table had been drawn up. But, as the data are still incomplete, and scholars and explorers are not fully agreed, it is felt to be wisest to postpone a subject which is still a subject of controversy.”

Consequently, we too, must be wise and refrain from committing the Bible to an historical inexactitude. The oppressing Pharaoh *may have been* an Assyrian but again *he may not*. Isaiah *may have* referred to the ancient bondage of Egypt, or to the more recent captivity of Israel under the Assyrians, mentioned for example in II Kings xvii. 6. This captivity is dated in the year 611 by *The Companion Bible*, and the fifty second chapter of Isaiah is dated 603-588 in the same work. This captivity then was of recent date, and the shadow of the Assyrian is thrown across the book as we have already seen. In the light of this fact the balance is in favour of interpreting this passage as of two oppressors—Pharaoh, and the more recent Assyrian.

The Lord looked at His captive people and said:

“What have I here? saith the Lord, that My people are taken away for nought?” (lii. 5).

One of the saddest results of Israel’s affliction and captivity was not the effect it had upon themselves merely, but the way in which the name of the Lord their God was blasphemed:

“They that rule over them make them to howl, saith the Lord; and My name continually every day is blasphemed” (lii. 5).

This concern for the name of the Lord, is uppermost in the hearts of such men as Daniel as they thought and prayed for their captive brethren, as a reading of Dan. ix. will show.

We must not pass on to other parts of this prophecy however, without a further reference to Isa. lii. 3:

“For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought: and ye shall be redeemed without money.”

There is an evident allusion here to the law concerning the redemption of “land” (Lev. xxv. 23-27) or of a “person” (Lev. xxv. 35-42), and the reader is doubtless sufficiently instructed in the law of the Kinsman Redeemer not to necessitate long

dissertation here. We refer to the relation of ‘money’ with ‘redemption’ for another purpose. Solomon, in Ecclesiastes says “Money answereth all things” (x. 19). Gesenius points out that in this passage we have ‘the accusative of the thing’ “Money answers with all things”. As a participle, the Hebrew translated “answer” denotes “respect, relation, answering or corresponding”. While in some ways the introduction of money to take the place of payment in kind or service became a snare to the avaricious and an instrument of oppression to the strong, yet of itself it made life easier and enlarged man’s borders considerably. An official disc of metal, or an official piece of paper today “answereth all things”. The pound passed over the counter at the railway booking office is in lieu of so much work done, or so much material exchanged. If the subscription to *The Berean Expositor* had to be paid in kind, then its issue would automatically cease, for such a method would be unworkable.

Now this is an important fact to keep in mind when contemplating the underlying principle of the Atonement.

“His owner shall be put to death, If there be laid on him a *sum of money*, then he shall give for the ransom of his life whatsoever is laid upon him” (Exod. xxi. 29, 30).

Here “money answereth” to the penalty of death, revealing the important principle of the Atonement, namely the acceptance of an equivalent. Both the words “a sum of money” and “ransom” are the Hebrew *kopher* derived from the verb *kaphar* “to make an atonement”. So, in Exod. xxx. we find “atonement” made upon the horns of the altar with the blood of the sin offering (Exod. xxx. 10) and in the same chapter a ‘ransom’ or ‘atonement’ effected by the payment of half a shekel (Exod. xxx. 12-16). In Numb. xxxv. 31, 32 the same word *kopher* is translated ‘satisfaction’, “Ye shall take no *satisfaction* for the life of a murderer he shall be surely put to death”. Here the law of Moses allowed no ‘equivalent’. The Lord Jesus Christ has offered a “corresponding price” for so the word *anti-lutron* is rendered by Dr. Young: “He gave Himself a ransom (*antilutron*) for all” (I Tim. ii. 6). We have, indeed, been ‘bought with a price’. Peter, who knew the law of Moses better than many of his critics, had these thoughts in mind when he said:

“Ye were not redeemed with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ” (I Pet. i. 18, 19).

So, the prophet Isaiah, leading our thoughts onward and upward to the fifty-third chapter, said to Israel: “Ye shall be redeemed without money”, for he was to reveal that the Messiah was to make His soul an offering for sin, an offering beyond the estimate of mortal man.

This great redemption was the subject of ‘good tidings’, then, in the days of Isaiah, as it will be when the deliverance is accomplished in the days to come:

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth” (lii. 7).

Here we have the alternation of ‘good tidings’ with peace and salvation in the first grouping, and the correspondence of this good tidings with the proclamation “Thy God reigneth”. Here therefore we have “The gospel of the kingdom” in essence. There can be no question as to the fact that the Hebrew word *basar* “To announce good tidings” means “to preach the gospel”, for it occurs for the last time in Isaiah, in the sixty first chapter:

“He hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek to proclaim liberty to the captives” (lxi. 1),

and is quoted by the Saviour of Himself in His synagogue witness at Nazareth (Luke.iv.18). When it can be said to Israel “Thy God reigneth” then will have come “the acceptable year of the Lord”, the “Jubile”, and then also will be finished the “mystery of God” as He hath declared to His servants the prophets (Rev. x. 7; xi. 15).

The word translated “to bring good tidings” was we have said is the Hebrew *basar*, and as this word occurs seven times in this prophecy, we will give the references:

- A | xl. 9. “O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion.”
“O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem.”
“Behold your God.”
- B | xli. 27. “From the first I have said to Zion.”
God infinitely above all gods.
- A | lii. 7. “Him that bringeth good tidings.”
“That brought good tidings of good.”
“Thy God reigneth.”
- B | lxi. 1. “Anointed . . . to preach good tidings to the meek.”
(quotes from A.V., R.V. and others).

This accounts for six of the references. The seventh is the answer to the good tidings brought to Israel, “*They shall show forth the praises of the Lord*” (Isa. lx. 6). Here is a reminder that preaching is twofold. It brings good tidings of grace *to* the sinner, but it also announces the good tidings of the glory of the Lord. “The gospel of the glory” (II.Cor.iv.4) is sometimes obscured by the presentation of grace to the sinner. As shown in the reference found in Isaiah this aspect completes the publication of God’s good tidings.

The association in Isa. lii. 7 and 8 of messengers on the mountains, and watchmen who lift up their voices is best understood by a people who have suffered the threat of invasion, and whose method of signaling the approach of either the enemy or the deliverer is much the same as that used in this land at the approach of the Spanish Armada.

“High on St. Michael’s Mount it shone: it shone on Beachy Head. Far on the deep, the Spaniard saw, along each southern shire, Cape beyond cape, in endless range, those twinkling points of fire.”

The words “They shall see eye to eye” found in Isa. lii. 8 do not carry the meaning of agreement which the figurative use of the phrase has in English.

“The last verse is a picture of the thronging of the city of the prophets by the prophets again—so close, that they shall look each other in the face The exile had scattered the prophets and driven them into hiding. They had been only voices to one another, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel with the desert between the two of them” (Geo. A. Smith).

And so, with a call to the people to come out of their captivity to leave the unclean behind, with the assurance that this great exodus would not be with haste or flight, the great section of Isaiah’s prophecy which has been before us comes to an end.

We have already seen that the opening words of comfort and assurance with which Isa. xl. introduces the theme of restoration, are in measure repeated in the closing portion just studied. In Isa. xl. the glorious restoration was not to be accomplished by any power of man who was as ‘grass’ but by the Word of the Lord that endured for ever. This restoration can have but one unquestioned basis, the Atonement; for Israel, like all men, have sinned and come short of the glory of God. To this, the prophecy of Isaiah has steadily pointed from the opening chapter, and we now arrive at its mightiest exposition. Isa. liii. is worthy of all the sanctified energy of our being in order that its blessed truth may be appraised at its true worth. But who is sufficient for this? Only the grace of God in unstinted measure can equip either writer or reader for the task. Our prayer is that He Who shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied in the great issues of His mighty work, may in some degree be satisfied with the effort put forth in these pages to understand and appreciate what it means when we read:

“It pleased the Lord to bruise Him.”

Editor: As we indicated in the first of this series of nine studies on Isaiah, these manuscripts of the late Mr. Welch turned up unexpectedly amongst old papers. It would seem that much that Mr. Welch was anticipating at the end of this article has been included in volumes XXXIV and XXXV of *The Berean Expositor*, but to what extent other material has been lost we cannot say.

Safeguards and Correctives.

No.1. “Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit” (Eph. iv. 3). pp. 110 - 115

We have seen that in the epistles to Timothy Paul gives a warning concerning the departure from the faith that will characterize the ‘last days’. To leave the matter there would be to present a negative aspect of truth. The same Apostle gives positive teaching which is intended to be a corrective and a safeguard, and these are indicated by a series of injunctions, exhortations and examples which fall into four main groups:

- (1) “To keep” (Eph. iv. 3; II Tim. i. 12, 14; iv. 7).
- (2) “To hold” (Phil. ii. 16; Col. ii. 19; I Tim. i. 19; iii. 9; vi. 12, 19; II Tim. i. 13; Titus i. 9).
- (3) “To stand” (Eph. vi. 11, 13, 14; Phil. i. 27; iv. 1; Col. iv. 12; II Tim. iv. 17).
- (4) “To watch” (Col. iv. 2; II Tim. iv. 5).

In the course of our expositions we shall probably come across other injunctions, but for all practical purposes the references listed under these four headings will provide the necessary correctives and safeguards against the infection of apostasy, and against the plague of ‘the itching ear’.

It is not without significance that, though these four exhortations and examples range throughout the Prison Epistles, finding illustrations in Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Timothy and Titus, a reference is found under each heading from Paul’s last epistle. It is important enough to justify a demonstration:

Correctives to apostasy.

“Keep”,	Eph. iv. 3	and	II Tim. iv. 7.
“Hold”,	Phil. ii. 16	and	II Tim. i. 13.
“Stand”,	Eph. vi. 11	and	II Tim. iv. 17.
“Watch”,	Col. iv. 2	and	II Tim. iv. 5.

This fact emphasizes the place which the second epistle to Timothy occupies in relation to the departure from the truth that will characterize the last days and impresses every true Berean with the imperative need for its study and assimilation.

Most readers of *The Berean Expositor* are aware that the pivot of the epistle to the Ephesians is the word ‘worthy’ of Eph. iv. 1, the first three chapters containing the great doctrinal revelation of the Mystery, the second three containing the corresponding practice that is required. This practice is not limited to the church and its ministry, but to daily life in home and business. It provides complete armour against the evil day, and calls upon the believer to put on the new man, put off the old, and to repudiate the lie.

Yet none of these things occupies the first place. The first exhortation in the practical section after the opening admonition ‘to walk worthy’, reveals the fact that the believer is first and foremost a custodian, a keeper, before he is a preacher or a teacher.

His first endeavour is directed to the safeguarding of a treasure, to keeping the unity of the Spirit. To neglect this, to put other service in its place, is to surrender the citadel and expose the whole revelation to betrayal. The admonition opens with the word of urgency ‘endeavour’ *spoudazo*. The root of this word, *speudo*, means ‘to hasten’, but the word must not be interpreted as the English ‘haste’ often is, namely a ‘hasty’ action, implying rashness or precipitate unreflection. The only association of *spoudazo* with ‘haste’ is its diligence and zeal that cannot tolerate waste of precious time. *Spoudazo* has no element of ‘haste’ in it when employed by the Apostle in II Tim. ii. 15, where it is translated ‘study’. The R.V. in both Eph. iv. 3 and II Tim. ii. 15 reads “give diligence”.

Ephesians iv. 3 opens with an exhortation to diligent endeavour, and endeavour that is intolerant of delay, that will not yield to the claims of other things as of “more practical importance”, and endeavour that puts first things first. Every believer is not necessarily a preacher or a teacher, he is however, a keeper. This responsibility can neither be shelved nor transferred. We can no more evade the responsibility of being a keeper, than we can avoid being members of the Body if Eph. i. 4 is true of us. If we are lax here, we give the enemy of truth a foothold.

Enotes ‘unity’ occurs but twice in the N.T., in Eph. iv. 3 and 13, “The unity of the Spirit” which we are enjoined to keep, and “the unity of the faith” unto which we are to attain. It is possible that the words “the unity of the Spirit” can mean “the unity of which the Spirit is the author”, or it can mean “the spiritual unity, which is composed of the seven items that follow”. The words “the unity of the faith” however, can hardly mean “the unity of which Faith is the author” but rather that unity which is composed of the items that follow. In both cases the ‘unity’ is expanded. Thus:

“The unity of the faith”

- (1) The acknowledgment of the Son of God
- (2) The perfect (mature) man
- (3) The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

“The unity of the Spirit”

- (1) One body
- (2) One Spirit
- (3) One Hope
- (4) One Lord
- (5) One Faith
- (6) One Baptism
- (7) One God and Father.

This sevenfold unity constitutes the treasure of which we are the custodians. Some of the items are the cause of much controversy. The distinctive constitution of the church

which is His Body is indicated in Eph. iii. 6, *sussoma*. This word is extremely difficult to translate into English. It is one of three terms, which have been rendered joint-heirs, joint-body and joint-partakers, and the idea seems to be that of a new kind of body, in which every member is on perfect equality with every other member, and one unknown in the physical world. This conception of the church it is our duty and joy to 'keep'. Now as the body without the spirit is dead, being alone, so we need to remember that this joint-Body is no formal lifeless uniformity, but a company actuated by one Spirit (see Phil. i. 27 for its outworking). The hope that we must safeguard is not the hope of Israel (Acts xxviii. 20), nor the hope that is focused upon the reign of the Son of Jesse (Romans xv. 12, 13), nor the hope that is vitally linked with Israel's prince, the Archangel (I Thess. iv.), but the one hope of our calling.

Perhaps the most fruitful source of controversy and one that requires great watchfulness is the "one baptism". Baptism can be considered under seven heads:

- (1) The "divers washings" (Heb. ix. 10); and the "doctrine of baptism" (Heb. vi. 2) which the Hebrews were enjoined to leave as they pressed on to that which was 'better' and 'perfect' ('mature').
- (2) The ceremonious 'washings' of cups, pots and vessels which the Pharisees substituted for the true worship of God and love of man (Mark vii. 1-13).
- (3) The baptism of John, which was in water, unto repentance, and intended to reveal who was the Messiah (Matt. iii. 11; Luke iii. 3; John i. 25, 26).
- (4) The baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Matt. iii. 11).
- (5) The partial fulfillment of this (Acts i. 5), the "fire" in its full sense reserved unto the Day of the Lord.
- (6) The baptism in water which set forth in symbol the believer's union with the Lord in His death, burial and resurrection (I Cor. i. 13).
- (7) The baptism of suffering to which the Lord referred in Matt. xx. 22, 23. This baptism was spoken of after the baptism at Jordan, and could not be therefore a baptism of either 'water' or 'Spirit' for that had already been observed. The baptism of Matt. xx. 22, 23 was the reality of which all the earlier baptisms were types and shadows.

There is one further typical baptism which is seldom mentioned but which is of extreme importance here. Long before the 'baptisms' and other carnal ordinances were 'imposed' upon the people until the time of reformation, and which signified that the way into the holiest of all was not then made manifest (Heb. ix. 8-10), there had taken place a baptism which had united the whole of Israel unto Moses as their leader, a baptism where 'water' was excluded by miracle. This took place at the crossing of the Red Sea.

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the Sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the Sea" (I Cor. x. 1, 2).

Here is baptism that followed immediately upon the exodus from Egypt; it made the people one, it joined them to Moses, but it was not a carnal ordinance. The people neither did nor observed anything, they just went over dry shod. The church of the One Body has had its exodus (Eph. i. 7) and 'upon believing' it was sealed (Eph. i. 13). Every member of the one Body has been united unto Christ in His death, burial and resurrection

by the only effective baptism that Scripture knows. Not typical or ceremonial, but an actual identification. The baptism of Col. ii. 12 can only be literal if the circumcision of verse 11 is literal. The one baptism of Eph. iv. 5 is balanced by the one Spirit of iv. 4. This blessed unity we are to keep. The other members of the sevenfold unity are not so controversial. The One Lord takes His place as the central and unifying member of the seven. On either side is ranged the one hope and the one faith.

This unity of the Spirit is kept in the bond of peace. We observe that the article is used with the word 'peace'. It is not peace in general but some aspect of peace in particular that is before us 'the bond of the peace'. To thus speak raises the question in the mind 'what peace?' The answer is supplied by referring back to the second chapter of Ephesians. We can only truly understand what aspect of peace is in the writer's mind if we know the kind of 'enmity' with which it is contrasted. So, the 'peace' of Rom. v. 1 is associated with justification, and the enmity is indicated in verse 10, and so the nature of the 'peace' of Col. i. 20 is explained by the enmity of verse 21. Now the enmity of Eph. ii. 15, 16 existed between two parties named 'the both' or 'the twain'. It arose out of 'the decrees' (Acts xv. - xvi. 4), or as the same word is translated in Eph. ii. 15, 'ordinances', and was symbolized by the middle wall of partition that kept the Jew and the Gentile apart in the Temple at Jerusalem, and kept believing Jew and Gentile apart during the Acts of the Apostles. That has all gone now. The middle wall of partition has been broken down, and of the twain He has 'created' (*ktizo*) "one new man, so making peace". It is *this* peace, connected with this unity that the Apostle has in mind in Ephesians iv. 3.

"For He is our peace, Who hath made the both one that He might reconcile the both unto God in one body for through Him, we, the both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. ii. 14-18).

It will be seen that this touches the very core of the calling of the church of the Mystery. The differences that were resident in the dispensation of the Acts cannot be brought over into the dispensation of the Mystery. The 'both' and the 'twain' are gone; in their place stands a 'new' thing, newly 'created'. This new man has his own standing, hope, faith and calling. The believer who is a member of this Body is called upon to 'keep' inviolate the peculiar distinctiveness of this calling. He must be prepared to be called hard names, because 'compromise' is not found in his vocabulary. He will be accused of bigotry because he refuses, as a sentinel, to parley. It is surprising what arguments believers will employ which, if applied to a mere monetary trust would be rejected with scorn. The writer of these words holds a sum of money in trust, which can be used for one purpose only, namely the reprinting in book form articles published in *The Berean Expositor*, which would otherwise be lost when bound volumes go out of print. No one has charged us with bigotry because we have not dipped into this fund to help other worthy causes. No one has pleaded 'christian charity' and hoped to receive help from this fund. The mere suggestion of either parleying or conceding is monstrous and unthinkable. Yet what is the trusteeship of keeping the unity of the Spirit? We can make no concessions, for the truth is not our property; we cannot reduce the terms or alter the constitution, for we have no authority to do so. It is required in stewards, not that they should be generous with other people's money, but that they should be faithful.

It is this spirit that alone can stem the tide that leads to apostasy; any other attitude is of itself an incipient ‘departure’.

Quoting from a letter recently received, the writer says it is impossible to introduce the truth of the Mystery without giving offence as it is to preach the cross and avoid its ‘offence’ and all attempts so to do are foredoomed. The attitude of *The Berean Expositor* from its first year of publication is that of uncompromising witness to the full truth of the Mystery, and a readiness by grace to take the consequences.

No.2. The Form of Sound Words (II Tim. i. 13). pp. 131 - 135

Taking the epistle to the Ephesians as the first epistle of this dispensation and the second epistle to Timothy as the last, we find that the opening exhortation is to keep the unity of the spirit, and the closing example is that of the Apostle at the end of his course who could say “I have kept the faith” (II Tim. iv. 7).

We now turn our attention to another Greek word and the exhortation which it is employed to give, namely the word *phulasso*, translated ‘keep’ in II Tim. i. 12 and 14. Before examining this passage, we observe that *phulasso* can be used of keeping sheep, keeping the law, and being kept from falling, but we also note that *phulake* is translated ‘prison’ some 36 times, so we are not surprised to see that while *phulasso* can be used of keeping sheep, or commandments, it is used of ‘the strong man armed’ who keeps his house, of four quarternions of soldiers who kept ward over Peter; of Paul being kept by a soldier in Acts xxviii. 16; or that the same word that is rendered ‘keep’ in II Tim. i. 12, 14, is translated ‘beware’ (II Tim. iv. 15), ‘watch’ (Mark vi. 48), & ‘ward’ (Acts xii. 10). Sleepless vigilance is implied in this idea of ‘keeping’ that we are now about to consider.

Let us turn to the second epistle to Timothy and acquaint ourselves with both the Apostle’s example and his exhortation to his son in the faith. The passage, II.Tim.i.12-14 is a complete section, and the following structure reveals its scope:

- A | 12. He is able to guard.
- B | 12. The *deposit*.
- C | 13. Have a form of sound words.
- A | 14. Do thou guard.
- B | 14. The *good deposit*.

We will leave the examination of ‘the form of sound words’ until later, and concentrate our attention on that which was the object of such watchful care “the deposit”. The reader of the Authorized Version will look in vain for the word ‘deposit’ in either verse 12 or 14, and as this is a matter of great importance we must give it our immediate attention.

Paratheke. This word means something entrusted or deposited with another, generally for safekeeping. The verb form *paratithemi* is found in II Tim. ii. 2 “The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same *commit* thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also”. A reference to the R.V. of II Tim. i. 12 will reveal the fact that the translation “I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him” is not the only possible rendering. The R.V. margin reads “Or that which He hath committed unto me”, and adds “Gr. my deposit”. There is therefore, no actual word that can be translated either ‘unto Him’ or ‘unto me’ in this verse, neither is there a verb that can be translated “He hath committed” or “I have committed”. Let us set out a word for word translation of this passage.

Dunatos estin ten paratheken mou phulaxai
Able He is the deposit of me to guard

Further light can be gathered from verse 14 “That good thing which was committed unto thee keep” *Ten kalen paratheken phulaxon*. Here again “Thing which was committed unto thee” is the rendering of both the A.V. and the R.V. for the two words “*kalen paratheken*”, “good deposit”.

In the light of the second reference where something had been most definitely ‘entrusted’ to Timothy by the Lord, and which he was enjoined ‘to keep or guard’, we can return to Paul’s initial statement in verse 12.

Arising out of the Gospel of which Paul was the appointed preacher, are his words recorded in verse 12:

“For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to guard the deposit entrusted, unto that day.”

To Paul (II Tim. i. 12) to Timothy (II Tim. i. 14) and to faithful men, able to teach others also has this sacred trust been committed. This entrusted deposit of truth they are to guard, to watch over, to keep. Now this can be done in a variety of ways, but one special safeguard is brought before us in the exhortation that is placed between verses 12 and 14 namely, the advisability to possess a form of sound words, which Timothy had heard from the Apostle.

The word ‘form’ is singular, the relative pronoun ‘which’ is plural, therefore Paul in not reminding Timothy that he had received a ‘form’ from Paul, he had heard “sound words” from him which it would be well to bring together as a unit of reference.

NOTE: At this point in this series of 5 articles, the late Mr. Welch intended to insert a brief account of the ‘deposit’ or ‘form of sound words’ that the articles exhort us to hold, keep, stand (fast for), watch (for apostasy), and teach. For some reason Mr. Welch did not do this. The reader is referred to that author’s full exposition appearing under the title *The Form of Sound Words* obtainable from the usual distribution agents. In the meantime the rest of this article gives the gist of what is included in the ‘deposit’.

Saul of Tarsus was chosen by the risen Lord Jesus Christ to be the Apostle Paul, instructing and entrusting to him two commissions. During Paul's time of ministry there was to be a change of administration by God. God's purpose to use the Jewish nation to disciple the world was suspended and the gospel was to go out to the Gentiles. The believer in Christ was to be accepted by God without regard to Israel.

“For as many as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ” (Gal. iii. 27, 28).

We today can never appreciate the astonishment with which this news was received by the Jews who for centuries had been the dispensers of the oracles of God. In Eph. iv. 12 Paul describes the work of his disciples as being “For the perfecting (or better, the readjusting) of the saints” (which work was to explain and teach the carry over from one divine administration (or dispensation) to another. The calling of the church of the One Body was a further exclusive administration depending on revelation, knowledge and understanding of that calling with the required response in faith and acknowledgment in daily living. The R.V. (Eph. iii. 9) expresses it “to make all men see what is the *dispensation* of the Mystery which from all ages has been (until then) *hid* in God”.

The fact revealed by Paul in his letters included the being and nature of God; God manifest in the flesh; the full interpretation of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, death, burial, resurrection and ascension; the all-sufficiency of His sacrifice; the full inspiration of the Scriptures; the essential work of the Holy Spirit illuminating the Word to the believer; the right division of the Word; the hope of those believing in the Name of the Son of God and the hope of those elected to the church of the One Body; the hope of the overcomers of Israel.

It is this body of truth revealed to him that Paul was vehemently insistent on being kept and defended, for he knew that his death was imminent and that afterwards his message would be attacked on all sides as indeed it was. Today sees a rescue and revival of these truths amongst, alas, so very few people. To those privileged to hear, receive and understand Paul's ministry there are unimaginable riches in heavenly places awaiting, but which carry with them the responsibility to obey the commands of these basic doctrines, and to spread their good news.

The Scriptures are the only source to give us the knowledge of God and His purposes for us. How important do we think is the acquisition of this knowledge? The woman of Samaria wanted to discuss with our Lord *where* those in her day should worship God. Christ's reply was:

“God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in *truth*”
(John iv. 24),

again He says:

“And this is life eternal, that they might *know* thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent” (John xvii. 3).

The knowledge of God through Christ and the Scriptures illuminated by the Holy Spirit embraced by the believer and acknowledged by the believer in his life, establishes the unity with the Godhead which is the whole eternal purpose of God. The worship of God in singing psalms and hymns; making intercessions for and serving others have their place, but only by the knowledge of Him and His righteousness can true unity and power and wisdom to serve be found. It is for this reason Paul's closing letter to Timothy pleaded for the defence and spread of this precious gospel.

**No.3. Holding the Truth against all comers.
“To whom we gave place by subjection,
no, not for an hour” (Gal. ii. 5).
pp. 150 - 153**

The foreshadowed apostasy that we have considered, and which is set out in some measure of detail in I Tim. iv. and II Tim. iii. & iv., is not included in Holy Scripture to cause us to slacken our witness or to conclude that nothing we can do is of any use. That attitude will but hasten the departure. The self-same epistles that foretell the apostasy encourage the believer to stand. “Give attendance to the reading.” “Preach the Word.” Accordingly we have reviewed the exhortations found in Paul's later epistles “to keep”; “to hold”; “to stand” and “to watch”. In our last article we gave our attention to Paul's admonition to Timothy to “Hold fast the form of sound words”. In Philippians, Colossians and the Pastoral Epistles there are exhortations that sound like the challenging of error by the Champions of truth, and to these we now give our attention.

“Holding forth the word of life” (Phil. ii. 16).

“Holding fast the Head” (Col. ii. 19 R.V.).

“Holding faith and a good conscience” (I Tim. i. 19).

“Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience” (I Tim. iii. 9).

“Holding fast the faithful Word” (Titus i. 9).

Different words are employed in the original to give the idea of “holding forth”, “holding fast”, etc., which may be examined as the passages come before us. It will be observed that in some cases the exhortation looks to public manifestation of the truth, in others to a private hold upon the truth. In one case it is the Word of Life, in others Life itself. In most cases it is the Word, but in two it is either the Head, Christ Himself, or the mystery of the faith which reveals His present glory. In two instances the holding of the truth is linked with a pure or a good conscience.

“Holding forth the word of life” (Phil. ii. 16).

The Philippians were exhorted to avoid murmurings and disputings, that they might be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke. No abstention from murmuring or disputing will make a believer a “son of God” but a believer can become a son of God

“without rebuke”, even as the Sermon on the Mount exhorts the disciples so to act that they “may be the children” of their Father which is in heaven, and a little earlier in the same chapter, the Lord had said “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. v. 16).

The Philippians were to comfort themselves in like manner in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. The A.V. reads “Among whom ye shine as lights in the world”, with a marginal note “Or, shine ye”. The R.V. reads “Among whom ye are seen as lights in the world” with the marginal note “Or, luminaries”. *Phainesthe* “ye appear” not “ye shine” (*phainete*) as the A.V. The same error is made in Matt. xxiv. 27, Rev. xviii. 23.

On the other hand in Matt. ii. 7 *Tou phainomenou asteros*, is correctly rendered ‘appeared’ (Bishop Lightfoot). The word translated ‘lights’ may refer to the heavenly bodies (Gen. i. 14) but the context of Phil. ii. 15 may indicate that the figure “carrying torches to guide passengers along dark and narrow streets in ancient cities” as the figure is used by Aristophanes, may well be the intention of the Apostle. Whether as luminaries in the sky, or humble torches in the streets, the believer should “Hold forth the Word of Life”. This is one of the ways in which the departures from the truth can be arrested. To hold forth the Word, however, involves something more than ability to speak, or an understanding of what is truth, it necessitates a very close relationship with the Lord Himself. This the Apostle brings forward in the great passage headed “Beware” in Colossians ii.

It is important to note how a portion of Col. ii. is parallel with I Tim. iv. 1-3. The warning opens with the words “Beware lest any man spoil you”, and the corrective against the deception of a vain philosophy is found in the words:

“*After* the tradition of men, *after* the rudiments of the world, and not *after* Christ”
(Col. ii. 8).

In like manner the second warning “Let no man beguile you” finds its corrective in the words:

“Worshiping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and *not holding the Head*” (Col. ii. 18, 19).

The apostasy is a departure from “the mystery of godliness”, the doctrine of demons is an attack upon Christ as the One Mediator. The great corrective is to hold fast the Head. Where the pre-eminence of Christ is the doctrine of both heart and head, there will be found one whose title might well be borrowed from the O.T. “the repairer of the breach” (Isa. lxxviii. 12).

“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him” (Isa. lix. 19).

What other standard can we lift up against the enemy of truth than the standard of Christ and the Scriptures? (“Hold fast the form of sound words”; “Holding forth the word of life”; “Hold the Head”).

The last reference in our list is that of Titus i. 9:

“Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Titus i. 9).

The word translated ‘holding fast’ is *antechomenon*, a compound of *anti* and *echo*, and is used in the Middle voice of the verb “To hold before one against something, hold on by, cling to” is the explanation given in Dr. Bullinger’s Lexicon.

The word is somewhat difficult to translate. It occurs but four times in the N.T. In Matthew vi. 24 and in Luke xvi. 13 it is used of one “holding to” one of two masters. In I Thess. v. 14 it is used ‘supporting’ the weak. “Holding fast by anything, in opposition to (*anti*) one who would wrest it away” (Bloomfield).

The Septuagint of Neh. iv. 16 uses *antecho* in the phrase “half of them kept guard; and there were spears, etc.”, with a footnote to ‘keep guard’ that reads “or, resisted”. In Job xxxiii. 24 the word is used in the opening of the verse “Then He is gracious unto him”, by reading “He will support him”.

The context of Titus i. 9 is intensely practical, the bishop must be blameless, “as the steward of God”. The soundness of his doctrine will not convince gainsayers if his life denies the truth he teaches.

The ‘faithful word’ suggests the ‘faithful sayings’ of the Pastoral Epistles, and in accordance with them the Apostolic doctrine. This approximates to the holding of the form of sound words, urged upon Timothy.

We should link with this holding of the faithful Word and its contextual link with wholesome practice, the two references given in the list namely I Tim. i. 19 and iii. 9, where “the faith” and “the mystery of the faith” are to be held with a good and pure conscience.

The departure deplored in I Tim. iv. was implemented by those whose ‘consciences’ were seared. While conscience is no infallible guide to truth, no one can hope to understand error unless the doctrine he holds is held conscientiously.

As we hold the Head, hold the faith, hold fast the faithful Word, and then hold it forth as a torch in the dark, can we hope to be of any influence in leading the Lord’s people in the way of truth as the end of the age approaches. Let us not slacken our hold because our efforts may seem to be so small; the flickering light of a candle has often lighted the way from death and wreck to life and light.

No.4. The call to stand, withstand and standfast.
pp. 166 - 169

The corrective against the apostasy of the last days is fourfold; the believer is exhorted to 'keep', 'hold', 'stand' and 'watch'. We have given some consideration to the first two, let us now examine the teaching of the epistles regarding the exhortation and encouragement to 'stand'. The references in Ephesians, Colossians and II Timothy use the word *histemi*, the references in Philippians the word *steko*; but the difference between these two words will be examined after we have considered the opening passage Eph. vi. 11, 13, 14.

The injunction 'to stand' in Eph. vi. is introduced by the word 'finally'. Doctrine and corresponding practice have occupied the bulk of the epistle, and now the concluding section is brought into correspondence with the opening section. "Spiritual blessings" find an echo in "spiritual wickednesses". The choice that took place "before the foundation of the World" is set over against the "darkness of this world". "The word of truth" finds a correspondence in "the girdle of truth"; "The gospel of salvation" with "the helmet of salvation", the exceeding greatness of the "power" "working" and "mighty power" which was wrought in Christ, is repeated in the exhortation to be 'strong' in the Lord and in the 'power' of His 'might'. Where our blessings are there will be conflict. Just as Israel were bidden not to meddle with other nations, but to fight with the Canaanites that barred their way to the land of promise, so we wrestle not with flesh and blood, our foes are 'spiritual' and are "the world rulers of darkness", spiritual Canaanites. Against these spiritual enemies the church of the Mystery is exhorted to stand.

It is of supreme importance that we should heed the accompanying commands. The exhortation is not simply to stand, it is accompanied by other equally important injunctions.

Put on the whole armour of God
 That ye may be able to stand against (pros).
Take unto you the whole armour of God
 That ye may be able to withstand (anti)
Having done all
 To stand.

Then follows the repeated exhortation to stand together with a detailed description of the whole armour of God. This armour is sixfold, and is rendered effective by prayer. This we can see if set out as follows:

A		The GIRDLE.	Truth or faithfulness.	\					
		B		The BREASTPLATE.	Righteousness.	\	Praying		
				C		The SHOES.	Firm footing of peace.	\	with
		A		The SHIELD.	Faith or faithfulness.	/	all		
		B		The HELMET.	Salvation.	/	prayer		
				C		The SWORD.	The Word of God.	/	

The word 'stand' is in the original (1) *histemi*; (2) *histemi pros*; and (3) *anthistemi*. The preposition *pros* when used with the accusative indicates "the literal or mental direction, as an end, marking the ultimate purpose" (Dr. Bullinger's Lexicon).

The 'mental direction' and 'ultimate purpose' of this armour is directed against "the wiles of the Devil". These 'wiles' have been spoken of before in Ephesians. The word is contained in Eph. iv. 14 "cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive".

"Instead of remaining immature, blown from our course and swayed by every wind of doctrine, by the adroitness of men who are dextrous in devising error; we are to hold by the truth" (Eph. iv. 14, 15, Moffatt).

Under the law of Moses, no one took up arms until reaching the age of twenty (Numbers i. 45), consequently the spiritual equivalent is 'the perfect (mature) man', not 'babes' or the immature that are exhorted to put on the armour and withstand the wiles of the Devil. His experimental acquaintance with the great doctrines of the faith, symbolized by the whole armour of God, "put on" and "taken" are to be directed against these Satanic attacks upon the truth. No other armour will avail, and but one weapon is provided, "the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God". *Anthistemi* also means to withstand or stand against, and is well translated 'resist' as it is in James iv. 7 "Resist the Devil" or as in I Pet. v. 9 "whom resist stedfast in the faith".

Strong emphasis is laid upon this conception of 'standing' and 'withstanding'. Practically nothing is said to encourage a campaign or an active invasion of the enemy's territory. That may await us when 'the evil day' arrives, but we should be wise not to attempt to run before the Lord commands. He has said 'stand'; to 'march' may appear bolder and even wise, but will ever be disastrous. He knows the enemy better than we do, He knows His plan and has control of both time and place. It is enough that we obey.

The word used in Phil. i. 27 is *steko* a form derived from *histemi*. It is difficult to assign a reason for the choice of this form except that it lends itself (being derived from the perfect tense), to the emphatic form "stand fast or firm". The word occurs but once in the Gospels, the remaining seven occurrences being found in Paul's epistles. These seven passages are the following:

- "To his own master he standeth or falleth" (Rom. xiv. 4).
- "Stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong" (I Cor. xvi. 13).
- "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free" (Gal. v. 1).
- "Stand fast in one spirit" (Phil. i. 27).
- "Stand fast in the Lord" (Phil. iv. 1).
- "Stand fast in the Lord" (I Thess. iii. 8).
- "Stand fast and hold the traditions taught" (II Thess. ii. 15).

The armour provided in Eph. vi. is useless unless "put on", even as mere doctrine is of no avail unless it be translated into practice by experience, so the exhortation in Philippians i. 27 "stand fast" is not without its experimental context. "Conversation" (manner of life) that becomes the gospel, "your affairs" as well as your creed, and a unity of both spirit and mind are the setting of this attitude.

Where Phil. i. 17 says “stand fast *in* one spirit” the next reference says “stand fast in the Lord” (Phil. iv. 1). Once again the words are set in a practical context. Two sisters in Christ are entreated by the Apostle to be of the same mind in the Lord (Phil. iv. 2). It is therefore very evident that the greatest single condition for this firm stand for the truth is found in unity. First, in defending and treasuring “the Unity of the Spirit” as we have seen in Eph. iv., then in the twofold practical unity of these passages in Phil. i. and iv. Unity can be attacked from without, but it can also be ruined from within.

Let us weigh our own motives, our plans, our desires in the balances of the sanctuary. Do they ‘become’ the gospel of Christ? Do they strengthen or weaken the ‘oneness’ of mind and spirit that should be characteristic of those who are by grace equal members of “one” Body, holding “one” faith, looking for “one” hope and acknowledging “one” Lord?

Many a plan that has been evolved by believing men and women, has had at the very commencement the seeds of its own undoing by reason of failure in these essential features.

We believe that there is a clarion call to all who rejoice in the truth of the Mystery, to stand fast in one mind and in one spirit in this blessed endeavour both to further the truth and to withstand the threatened apostasy, and only as each step conforms to the basic requirements we have seen, can any such movement prosper with the good success that comes from the Lord. This we covet above all else, not that in our stewardship we should be found successful, but found faithful. The rest is with Him.

**No.5. “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith” (I Cor. xvi. 13).
pp. 170 - 175**

The exhortations ‘to stand’ that are found in Paul’s later epistles are incorporated in the prayer of Epaphras, who prayed on the behalf of the Colossians that they should ‘stand perfect and complete in all the will of God’ (Col. iv. 12).

In the structure of the epistle to the Colossians, this prayer of Epaphras is in correspondence with the preaching and warning of the Apostle; the one rounding off the other.

E | i. 28 - ii. 1. Preaching to present perfect.

* * * * *

E | iv. 12, 13. Prayer to stand perfect.

The words ‘present’ and ‘stand’ are both derived from the same root *paristemi* “to present” which is literally “to stand or cause to stand beside”, while the word ‘stand’ in the prayer of Epaphras is the simpler word *histemi*.

The great lesson for us all at the moment is the intentional interrelationship of ‘preaching’ and ‘praying’. Paul’s preaching and Epaphras’s praying are both marked by the same intensity. In both passages the word *agonizomai* ‘to agonize’ or to be in great conflict is used: “striving” (Col. i. 29); “Great conflict” *agona* (Col. ii. 1); “Epaphras who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently (*agonizomai*) for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect (mature) and complete in all the will of God” (Col. iv. 12).

If we are to use the armour provided, we must not only take the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, but we must sanctify all that has been provided by the grace of ‘all prayer’ (Eph. vi. 10-18).

If some are to stand in the breach and successfully withstand the onslaught of the Evil one, others must as earnestly kneel in the presence of God in upholding prayer. We are dependent upon one another, and no member of the Body of Christ, is superfluous.

There is however one thought more that Truth demands before we can feel that we have presented this matter in all its aspects. We have closed the list of references under the heading ‘stand’ with II Tim. iv. 17.

Here we are no longer in an atmosphere of active and united fellowship; we have arrived at the conditions and characteristics of “the last days”,—isolation, rejection, misunderstanding. The actions of those like Demas who could not endure the limitations set by the exclusive truth of the Mystery, and who go back unto those conditions from which in the first flush of their acceptance, they had withdrawn. Paul was not absolutely bereft of human fellowship, he could still write “Luke is with me”; that was blessed, but he had to write “*only* Luke is with me” which was sad (II Tim. iv. 11).

“At my first answer no man *stood with* me Notwithstanding the Lord *stood with* me” (II Tim. iv. 16, 17).

The words translated ‘stand with’ in these two passages are not the same in the original. The first means “to come in at the same time” the other means “to stand beside” a word already brought to our notice in the transitive form “to place one beside”, “to present” (Col. i. 28).

While therefore the active fellowship of the Lord’s redeemed children is everywhere stressed as a vital factor in this great stand for the faith, it is nevertheless made very clear by this closing experience of the Apostle, that even though all men forsake us and none stand with us, “He hath said I will never leave thee nor forsake thee”, and consequently though at the last we have to experience the bitterness of solitude and rejection, we shall nevertheless have the joy of knowing that He will remain with us to the very end.

We earnestly desire the active cooperation and fellowship of all like minded believers in our stand for the truth entrusted to us, but we seek all sufficient grace, to be prepared to

stand alone, if need be, in the blessed fellowship of a rejected Apostle, a rejected revelation, and alas a rejected Christ.

“To watch.”

The fourth and closing exhortation of those listed by us in the opening of this series is the exhortation to “watch”. Two passages are before us:

“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col. iv. 2).

“But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (II Tim. iv. 5).

Two different Greek words are employed by Paul in these passages. (1) *gregoreo*, and (2) *nepho*. While both words are translated “watch”, they have distinct origins that must be investigated.

The first word is derived from *egeiro* ‘to awake’ as from sleep, and which is used not only to speak of actual wakefulness, but of resurrection from the dead.

To awake from sleep. Matt. ii. 13, 14, 20, 21; viii. 25, 26.

To arise from the dead. Matt. x. 8; xxviii. 6; Rom. iv. 24.

Watchfulness that demands the word *gregoreo* therefore, is a watchfulness that is wakeful, has aroused itself, is anticipating the resurrection of the dead in its alertness in a world that sleeps the sleep of death.

In the Gospels the word is used of two calls for vigilance ‘watching’ because the day and the hour of the Lord’s return is unknown, and ‘watching’ with the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane.

When Paul warned the Ephesian church concerning the grievous wolves that would enter in among them, not sparing the flock, drawing away disciples after them, he said “Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears” (Acts xx. 31).

To the Corinthians who were divided among themselves, and whose doctrine and practice had been invaded by false teaching and false ideas, he said:

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (I Cor. xvi. 13).

To the Thessalonians the Apostle wrote:

“Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober” (I Thess. v. 6).

Here Paul introduces the second word *nepho* ‘be sober’ indicating most clearly that while there is a watchfulness that rises above the claims of natural sleep, there is a watchfulness that can be impaired by insobriety.

“For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (I Thess. v. 7, 8).

Here, moreover is a link with Eph. vi., and there will be observed that those who put on the armour of God are called upon to wrestle “with the world-holders of this *darkness*” (Eph. vi. 12).

To Timothy and all those faithful men who are able to teach others also (II Tim. ii. 2) the Apostle says in the day of declension “Watch thou in all things”.

Nepho and *nephalios* are mostly translated ‘sober’ (I Thess. v. 6, 8; I Pet. i. 13; iv. 7; v. 8; I Tim. iii. 11; Titus ii. 2). In two passages *nepho* is translated ‘watch’ namely in II Tim. iv. 5 and I Pet. iv. 7; and *nephalios* ‘vigilant’ in I Tim. iii. 2.

Nepho in its primary meaning refers to abstinence from drink, and while it is obvious that no man who was addicted to drink could serve as an evangelist with Paul’s approval it can hardly be held in seriousness that he actually counseled Timothy “do not get drunk” in II Tim. iv. 5. The word had already moved from its primitive reference to drink. We shall discover the significance of the Apostle’s choice if we turn to another reference in the same epistle, this time a compound, *ananepho* translated in the A.V. “recover themselves” the margin reads “Greek, awake” and the R.V. margin reads “Greek, return to soberness” and Moffatt “come to their senses”. The whole passage is of supreme importance in view of the subject that is before us, namely, withstanding the drift that is now setting in toward the foretold departure from the faith.

“Shut your mind against foolish, popular controversy; be sure that only breeds strife. And the Lord’s servant must not be a man of strife; he must be kind to everybody, a skilled teacher, a man who will not resent injuries; he must be gentle in his admonitions to the opposition—God may perhaps let them change their minds and admit the Truth; they may come to their senses again and escape the snare of the Devil, as they are brought back to life by God to do His will” (II Tim. ii. 23-26, Moffatt).

In the opening article of this series, we observed that the four key words “keep”, “hold”, “stand”, “watch” while found in several of the Prison Epistles, are all found in the last epistle that Paul wrote, namely the second epistle to Timothy. One or two elements of instruction emerge from this fact.

- (1) The epistles to Timothy were primarily addressed to a workman, a teacher, an evangelist, and the approved successor of the Apostle. No believer today stands exactly in the unique position that was occupied by Timothy. However, Timothy himself was instructed how to ensure a succession, and this is found in II Tim. ii. 2 and in various exhortations regarding service that run through the epistle.
- (2) The fact that the complete set of words are all found in II Timothy indicates the great importance of that epistle to us all, who find ourselves living near the end of the dispensation. We believe the importance is sufficient warrant for a restatement as we draw to a conclusion.

KEEP. II Tim. iv. 7. Here we have the example of the Apostle Paul. He sums up his life's witness under three heads:

- (1) "A good contest." In this he says he has put up a good fight.
- (2) "A course finished." The race set before him has been covered.
- (3) "The faith I have kept." This is his last word.

KEEP. II Tim. i. 12, 14. Paul was unmoved and unswayed by the intense and persistent opposition he had experienced, being persuaded that the Lord was fully able to keep that which had been entrusted against that day. As he comes to the end of his course he passes 'the good deposit' over to the safeguarding of Timothy.

"That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" (II Tim. i. 14).

HOLD. II Tim. i. 13. In direct connection with this good deposit and sacred trust Timothy is exhorted to have and to hold "a pattern of sound words" which he had heard of the Apostle and to hold such a pattern in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

STAND. II Tim. iv. 17. After the exhortation "to stand" that he had given in earlier epistles, the Apostle encourages us all who are in any sense in true succession with his despised yet glorious ministry to remember that even if 'no man' will stand with us, the Lord will, even as He stood by Paul until his work was done.

WATCH. II Tim. iv. 5. This we have been considering in this article and this one word gathers up within itself the other three. We can neither "keep", "hold" or "stand" if we do not watch, if we are not conscious that we are surrounded by a world lulled to sleep in a drunkenness, not brought about by wine or strong drink, but by the false doctrines that have been imbibed and which have been circulated by the Father of lies.

We have seen something of the "Signs of the Times" and have been forewarned concerning the character of the apostasy from the faith that shall darken the closing days of this dispensation and we have seen the fourfold corrective given in Paul's later epistles, which if heeded will not only keep us ourselves from complicity with this sad departure, but enable us to hold aloft the Word as in a dark place with the glad consciousness that some at least will be led to change their minds, come to their senses, and be delivered from the snare that is spread for their feet.

Thoughts on John's Gospel

No.14. Chapter xiv.

pp. 32 - 35

Our Lord Jesus Christ is about to leave His beloved disciples and to face death, and for us a terrible ordeal of death on a cross. This was made even worse by the intense heartaches of seeing His own people doing this to Him, and the sorrow that they “knew not the time of their visitation” (Luke xix. 44). “He beheld the city, and wept over it” (Luke xix. 41). Our Lord’s urgent desire was to comfort and assure them and to show them that He Himself was the true and living way:

“Jesus saith I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh *unto the Father*, but by Me” (xiv. 5, 6).

Do note that that way leads us via resurrection *to the Father*. Do we realize what a wonderful thought this is? Consider how Peter grasped this exclusive way of access at the beginning of his ministry:

“Be it known unto you all that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth does this man stand here before you whole 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. 10-12).

With what gracious assuring words our Lord announces His plans to receive His followers after their journey through death’s portals:

“In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself” (xiv. 2, 3).

These words are so lovingly chosen, “If it were not so, I would have told you”.

The unity of the Godhead is a great mystery but one which has to be accepted by us in the terms used by the Holy Spirit in the Word of God. We have in this chapter, besides God the Father, the Spirit of Truth; another Comforter; the Holy Ghost; and the Son of God Himself. Consider the overlapping texts that describe the blessed union that can be possible between these and the believer, and this in terms of “dwelling with”; “abiding with”; and “being in”:

“. . . He (God) shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of Truth . . . for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (xiv. 16, 17).

“. . . . I will come to you at that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you” (xiv. 18, 20).

“If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (xiv. 23).

The coming separation, betrayal and crucifixion of our Lord was going to put a great strain on the faith of the disciples, so that Christ gives them words of encouragement and assurance that His Father had all things under His power and control:

“Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe” (xiv. 28, 29).

Christ announces that He was going away to the Father and coming again to them and mentions this prior knowledge as proof of His authority so that due fulfillment would support their faith. This is the way God works to set the seal of truth on His words. A similar example is found in chapter xiii. 19: where the Lord Jesus foretells His betrayal by one of His disciples:

“Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He.”

Judas (not Iscariot) asks our Lord how He would manifest Himself to them and yet not to the world (xiv. 22). The answer lies in verses 23-26. The Holy Ghost would teach them and bring all things to their remembrance that the Lord had taught them. Looking at the negative side:

“. . . . the Spirit of Truth: Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him” (xiv. 17).

The world barred by unbelief cannot find the Saviour nor receive the spiritual riches the Holy Spirit is ready to minister to our minds. Paul’s mighty doctrinal letter to the Romans develops the conclusion that the flesh cannot achieve the required righteous standards of God and further that while the Jewish law was in itself righteous, it too, failed because of the weakness of human flesh, but nevertheless, it prepared the way for the righteousness of the spirit that rests in the finished work of Christ. In the verse now quoted we see the place accorded by God to faith in His plans for mankind:

“For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who hath subjected the same in hope” (Rom. viii. 20).

God has ordained that our lives in themselves have no continuing purpose (vanity—uselessness) for they end in death. But these lives are subjected to hope or channeled into faith in the Son of God whereby we have an entrance in to a new and eternal state and age.

It is so necessary for us to pause and meditate on the references to the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth presented to us in this wonderful Gospel of John:

“Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whosoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you” (John xvi. 13, 14).

This same Spirit of Truth can be active in our lives today, illuminating the difficult passages of Scripture, bringing to our remembrance other more distant texts that complement the truth we are studying, and over all, bringing us into closer knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and the work of His Father.

“. . . . the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over Me; but I do as the Father has commanded Me, so that the world may know that I love the Father” (xiv. 30, 31, R.V.).

Satan had no power over our Lord for at all times He was completely sinless. These verses imply the added reason (for Christ’s ascendancy over Satan), that Christ loved and obeyed the commands of His Father. Look at our Lord’s three temptations in the wilderness. In each case Christ recited the commands of His Father recorded in the Scriptures. Such steadfast loyalty and response demonstrated the love of the Son for the Father, upholding His commands and seeking the glory of God by declaring and conforming to the wisdom and righteousness of God.

The influence and machinations of the Devil in the world today are inextricably intermingled with our own sinful nature with its snares of the flesh. Our steadfast love to God and obedience towards His commands will, through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, deliver us from these twin dangers.

Turning to another of the many references to love in this chapter:

“If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for the Father is greater than I” (xiv. 28).

Why should the disciples have rejoiced? Surely some of the characteristics of love (charity) of I Cor. xiii. should supply the answer, “seeketh not her own”; “hopeth all things”. The thought that their beloved Saviour would shortly be released from all this sufferings and would be reunited with His Father should even at that hour, have made their hearts rejoice. Even so, as we approach the last days of our earthly life, we should equate the attendant burdens and ills of old age with the untold blessings that will be ours in Christ and, holding fast to our hope, rejoice.

It is strange that all the Scriptures contain, like hidden gold, instruction in the ways of God and these are His commands to us. We can use all Scripture, for as we have seen, God has set ‘prophecy’ and has ordained ‘events’ to fulfil that prophecy right through the platform of history out into the future. This way of God of prophecy and fulfillment is like the warp and weft of a piece of cloth. While it is in one piece we see with the eye of faith the pattern or autograph of the Designer. If we pull it apart, the warp from the weft, in unbelief and skeptical criticism, we are left with a bundles of confused threads. May we find joy and satisfaction in His presence by obedience to our faith.

No.15. Chapter xv.
pp. 72 - 76

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman” (xv. 1).

Our Lord is going to use the figure of a vine to describe the work of God the Father preparing mankind for eternal life and all that will be required in that future state. In this opening sentence it is impressed on us that God the Father is the Husbandman, the one in charge of the operation. The Lord Jesus Christ is the “True Vine” from which all the branches must come and upon which they all depend for life and sustenance. Finally the purpose of the branches is to bear fruit.

The Greek word for ‘true’ here is *alethinos*. *The Companion Bible* says of this word “that which has *truth* for its base”. Compare a similar usage of the word in John vi. 32, “I am the *true* bread”. While the emphasis is “true” as distinct from “fictitious”, the usage has a close affinity with ‘truth’ itself. We mention this detail to underline the fact that this chapter, in common with so much of John’s message, has the channel of knowledge and power as coming to us from God the Father—through His Son—through His Word—and finally through the Spirit of Truth.

The nourishment that is fed to the branches by Christ, the True Vine, has all been taught in earlier chapters. Living Water (John iv. 10); True Bread (vi. 32); flesh and blood (vi. 56), and remember Christ added to this last reference “the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” to which again He adds “thereby the Spirit quickeneth (our spirit) but our flesh profiteth nothing” (vi. 63).

The branches must be “in Christ” and they must receive nourishment by the Word and the Spirit of Truth. John knows the value of stating opposites to enforce the positive:

“. . . . the branch *cannot* bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; *no more can ye, except abide in Me*” (xv. 4).

“. . . . without Me ye can do *nothing*” (xv. 5).

“If a man abide *not* in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (xv. 6).

There are two aspects of “fruit”. (1) There is the fruit of the Spirit in our own lives and which we should at all times display:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (self-control)” (Gal. v. 22, 23).

“. . . . walk as children of light: (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth); proving what is acceptable unto the Lord” (Eph. v. 8-10).

(2) The believer should be ready as he is called, to witness to the world by teaching from the Word of God or assisting others in this ministry through the spoken, written, printed or tape recorded word. Those who as a result of our service have been brought

into a knowledge of the Truth are referred to by Paul as fruit and this is the purpose of the vine:

“. . . that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established: . . . that I might have some *fruit* among you also” (Rom. i. 11, 13).

These two aspects of fruit run very parallel. We are unlikely to yield fruit in the second if we have not already displayed fruit in the first:

“Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him Who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet he is not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits” (II Tim. ii. 3-6).

Verse 6 in this context is not teaching we should pay our vicar an adequate stipend but rather that when we take on the responsibility of teaching we should be prepared to exhibit a blameless life. II Timothy is a priceless manual of instruction for the novice seeking to pass on to others the message of salvation and in iii. 10 the Apostle Paul declares:

“But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience.”

Why should we not be able to boldly stand up and repeat this verse to those to whom we minister? At least our conscience should be clear to permit us to do so if it were necessary.

“Be ye therefore perfect (having unbiased mature responsible concern for others without any element by us of judgment) even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. v. 48).

Consider John xv. 3:

“Now ye are *clean* through the word which I have spoken unto you.”

There is utter joy in discovering that every single thing connected with the Lord is so perfect for its ordained purpose, whether it be the physical body of man, the plan of redemption, the Word of God or indeed any other work or creation of His. The word “clean” in the text above is *katharos* and is translated ‘pure’ as well as ‘clean’. The thought behind this word is that of being purged of all ideas that were contrary to the teaching of Christ; corrected from all the misunderstandings of false tradition. Psa. xii. compares the words of man with those of God, saying of the latter:

“The words of the Lord are *pure* words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Psa. xii. 6).

This verse reflects the idea that although God inspires man to record His words in the Bible He sees that they are so purged of all the dross associated with man that they stand out in perfection of purpose.

Following on this theme we find that Paul had so faithfully discharged his responsibility of ministry and witness that even though many refused his words, Paul could declare he was *pure* or blameless from the judgment that would fall on his rebellious hearers:

“And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am *clean*: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles” (Acts xviii. 6).

“Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am *pure* from the blood of all men” (Acts xx. 26).

Paul’s ministry had been correct and complete to that dispensation. Paul had passed on all he had received. In like manner in John xv. 3 Christ is saying His disciples were correctly and completely equipped for their ministry through the words He had taught and their acknowledged faith in Him as the Saviour of the world. Much of course had to follow and the Spirit of Truth had to come to call these things to their remembrance and to work with them. Before we leave the subject of cleansing, John xv. 2 says of God the Father:

“Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He *taketh away*: and every branch that beareth fruit, He *purgeth it*, that it may bring forth more fruit.”

The word ‘purgeth’ is allied to the word ‘clean’ in Greek and emphasizes the work of the Father in making the believer more prepared and conformed to His service. The words ‘taketh away’ are better translated ‘lifted up’ just as we stake up the leaves and branches of plants so that they have light and air and are freed from the smothering effect of the earth.

As we might expect in the second part of chapter xv. our Lord again refers to love; the love of the Father, the Son and the disciples one to another. Love is based on the wise sympathy for others together with the clear understanding of their needs and the best way in the sight of God to supply them. Where man is concerned that service of love must come from a heart emptied of self which when it is operating replaces the pride of man by the intention to glorify God. Christ warns His disciples that they can expect the same cruel opposition from the world as He had had and was to receive.

We have mentioned joy in the knowledge of the perfect ways of God. Our Lord pointedly pronounces that His parable of the vineyard and all His words that precede and surround it can bring them a sublime joy of which no man can rob them:

“These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (xv. 11).

No.16. Chapter xvi.
pp. 95 - 99

“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended” (John xvi. 1).

The Greek word, *skandalizo* for ‘offended’ has the alternative meaning in a concordance of ‘cause to stumble’. In our dictionaries the English counterpart is ‘scandalize’ stated to mean “offend moral feelings, sense of propriety, or ideas of etiquette”. Our Lord knew the course that the closing days of His ministry were to take, crucifixion and the dispersal and persecution of His followers. Our Lord knew too, the immediate world’s verdict on these events:

“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block (*skand*), and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (I Cor. i. 22-24).

The Jews expected a Messiah Who would release them from subservience to the Romans and maintain their place and authority in their nation’s affairs (John xi. 48). All the aspects of our Lord’s humble entry into the world and His witness as His Father’s Servant (Phil. ii. 7; Isa. xlii. 1) were so different from the Jew’s expectation that it ‘scandalized’ them.

It was to prepare His disciples for the imminent confusing events that He repeated His forecast of what they could expect. Christ’s words in chapter xv. dwelt on these matters too. Here was assurance to His disciples that the Father had all things under His control.

“These things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them” (xvi. 4).

What greater comfort and assurance could He have given them than His announcement of the coming of the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth?

“When He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come” (xvi. 13).

If only Christians would more fully realize it, the whole spiritual life of the believer to maturity is bound up with having the indwelling Spirit of Truth opening the Scriptures to him and ‘bringing to his remembrance’ the things he has read in the Word of God and making them illumine every facet of life to which they have relevance.

Here is God’s appointed way whereby we may progressively get to know Him and His Son:

“He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you” (xvi. 14, 15).

If we observe the things possessed, governed by the possessive pronoun “My” (*emos*) used in John’s Gospel we find they are: meat (to do the Father’s will); judgment; word; commandments; peace; love; joy; glory; kingdom. All these are aspects of the Father’s doctrine Christ came to pass on to us. They all contribute to our knowledge of Him.

In contrast to this essential knowledge of God and His Son, Christ specifically says that all the dreadful deeds that His countrymen were to perpetrate on Himself and His disciples were because of this lack of such knowledge.

“And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor Me” (xvi. 3).

All through the history of the church dreadful things have been done in the name of the Christian religion because they have not fully understood God’s Word. Even today they have their counterpart with those who would separate families and follow many erroneous doctrines because of misunderstood passages of Scripture. If the Lord Jesus Christ had been truly known, His Spirit of Truth would have corrected the error. If in humility we patiently seek guidance from the Holy Spirit we cannot miss the way.

Returning to the word ‘offend’ we find it used once more in this Gospel in chapter vi. The whole channel of the knowledge of the Father and the Son is in prospect under the figures of bread, flesh and blood. Man by food and drink digests their constituents and they become part of his body. By figure of speech to eat the flesh of the Son of God and to drink His blood is to absorb into our spiritual life (in no sense our physical body) the life giving properties of the Holy Spirit operating through and by the Word of God. For to accept the truth of the Bible and to walk in the Spirit according to its teaching is to partake of God’s plan for the forgiveness of our sins and the redemption that God Himself has imparted to the shed blood of the Saviour. It was the failure of our Lord’s audience to understand the figurative language that caused the majority of those who heard Him to ‘be offended’ and to turn away. To Peter and the others our Lord asks “Will ye also go away?” (vi. 67), to which Peter blessedly answers:

“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (vi. 68, 69).

Let us be quite clear as to what our Lord was teaching. The whole Bible and that is the Word of God, was necessary for the spiritual growth of the ‘new man’. Moreover the birth of the new nature in man was equally dependent on the meaning God had deliberately given to the cross in all its prophetic implications and fulfillments.

The Jews and Greeks for different reasons found such doctrine unacceptable as we have seen. Today man has so much pride in intellectual accomplishments, examining and criticizing the original texts of Scripture that he is blind to the supernatural surveillance and overruling of God Who could direct His servant Paul to write:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. iii. 16).

Many today are ‘offended’ by the Scriptures for, for them much of the O.T. seems “contrary to their moral feeling” and the necessity even today of “the shedding of blood for forgiveness” (even if this took place 2000 years ago) does not agree with their “sense of propriety”.

Our Lord’s gracious concern for His disciples leads Him to refer again to His withdrawal from the world:

“A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father” (xvi. 16).

In even plainer language He repeats the message:

“I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father” (xvi. 28).

The whole of this life culminates in the miracle of passing from the state of corruptible flesh to incorruptible spirit: “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption” (I Cor. xv. 42). God has come all the way to meet us, to help our unbelief by (1) setting His Own Son to be the “firstborn from the dead” (Col.i.18); (2) appointing twelve apostles who had been with Christ from the start to the finish of His ministry to witness to His resurrection; and (3) by the mass of prophetic utterances in His Word and their precise fulfillment concerning this historic event confirm their divine origin and truth.

God imposed a measure of discipline on Adam and Eve and their progeny when sin entered the world. Man was tried by the discipline of thorns and weeds (symbolic of adversity), while woman faced pain in the accomplishment of her role in life of childbirth. Our Lord now uses the picture of a woman enduring the ordeal of bringing a new life into the world to reflect the immediate days ahead. They would be in anguish and sorrow for their blessed Lord but this would be followed by that wonderful resurrection and all the powers and hopes it would unleash, both for them and all the world to which they would begin to minister. Truly at that time, with the delivered mother, they would forget all that was past in the wonderful joy and possibilities that lay in the future:

“A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you” (xvi. 21, 22).

May the God-appointed adversities of this life be willingly accepted so that they temper and prepare our character for the glorious future in the world to come.

No.17. Chapter xvii.
pp. 116 - 120

The sacred prayer of our Lord in this chapter summarizes the work of Christ from before the foundation of the world to His re-entry into His glory. The Son desired that the disciples His Father had given Him might be with Him there and behold His glory (xvii. 24). We have here plain statements concerning God manifest in Christ in glory before the foundation of the world; God manifest in Christ as the Son of His Heavenly Father on earth; and finally God manifest in Christ in the glory again. There is only One God but for our human limitations such separate manifestations were evidently necessary and we do well not to spoil such a holy demonstration by attempting to explain or define spiritual margins:

“. . . . the glory which I had with Thee before the world was” (xvii. 5).

“. . . . now I am no more in the world and I come to Thee” (xvii. 11).

“I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do” (xvii. 4).

The last words of the previous text “the work which Thou gavest Me to do” are highlighted by a brief study of the phrase “before the foundation of the world” in verse 24. *Katabole*, the Greek word for ‘foundation’ occurs 10 times in the N.T. and illustrates the supernatural power of God from the beginning to see how His creation will react and live in the future. While leaving mankind with their free choice (and not controlling them as puppets) God overrules where necessary so that His ordained goal will be reached. God foresaw the effect of the flesh on man and the misuse by Satan of the power and the authority given to him over the world. Right from Gen. iii. 15 to the end of Revelation, God enshrined in His Word His declared plans to redeem His people, to establish them as His children and as the Apostle Paul sketches the goal:

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also glorified together” (Rom. viii. 16, 17).

So the following texts centering round *katabole* demonstrate complete knowledge of God and His wonderful provision for us:

- (1) “I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the *foundation* of the world” (Matt. xiii. 35). This was quoted from Psa. lxxviii. 2 where the Holy Spirit recorded by the psalmist all those years ago God’s intention to reveal in parable to His elect some of His future plans.
- (2) “When the Son of man shall come in His glory then shall the King say Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the *foundation* of the world” (Matt. xxv. 34). Here for our comfort is the announcement of God’s provision for His elect so long ago and will He not have done this for all His companies of believers?
- (3) Jesus Said woe unto you, scribes and pharisees ye build the sepulchers of the prophets, and your fathers killed them ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds

of your fathers. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the *foundation* of the world, may be required of this generation” (Luke xi. 47-50). The witness of God’s prophets, silenced by murder or persecuted will be used by God to condemn the offenders across the world’s history. Man will have no excuses at the day of judgment.

- (4) “Father Thou lovedst Me before the *foundation* of the world” (John xvii. 24). The span of the love of God for Christ is seen for Christ’s participation in His plans for the redemption of the world. This love was twice witnessed to the world by the Father’s voice from heaven: “This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased” (Matt. iii. 17 and xvii. 5).
- (5) “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the *foundation* of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph. i. 4). The calling of the church of the One Body is in view over the span of the ages.
- (6) Read Heb. iv., the word “*foundation*” occurs in verse 3. God’s rest from creation (works in verse 3) typifies the millennial kingdom where a company of elect believers will find a place. Again we have links in a long term plan.
- (7) “For then must He often have suffered since the *foundation* of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. ix. 26). Here is the culminating work of Christ, the key to all the Father’s plans. In verse 24 we also read “Now to appear in the presence of God for us”. This supreme work of Christ was so important in God’s sight that hundreds of years passed with the O.T. laws and Temple ritual committed to Israel prefiguring the work of the Lamb of God and our Saviour.
- (8) “Redeemed with the precious blood of Christ foreordained before the *foundation* of the world” (I Pet. i. 20). Peter’s added testimony that Christ as the Redeemer of mankind was ordained from the very beginning.
- (9) “. . . . and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the *foundation* of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain” (Rev. xiii. 8 R.S.V.). God foreknew the names of those who would worship the beast of Rev. xiii.! These would not be written in the book of life.
- (10) “. . . . they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the *foundation* of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and shall be present” (Rev. xvii. 8 R.V. margin). Those faithful believers and overcomers at the time of the end will not be deceived by the deceptions of the beast: God’s overruling love and provision will over His elect to the end.

When we stand back considering the span of God’s plans set forth in these texts we can see how the Lord’s prayer we are studying epitomizes the fruit of these plans coming on Christ’s beloved disciples. Christ has shown He has come from the Father, that the Father sent Him. Christ has given to His disciples the Father’s words and now He looks forward to having these same men see and share His future glory. This same prayer covers us as ‘the other sheep’ in John x. 16.

Another wonderful aspect of this prayer is that the believer is shown as a possession of the Father that He gives to His Son. Do we realize what a wonderful thought that is? We remember that while the Son gives the believer in Him power to become a child of God, it is in the Father’s province that he is born of the Spirit:

“. . . . as many as received Him, to them gave He (Christ) power to become the sons (children) of God, even to them that believe on His Name: which were *born . . . of God*” (John i. 12, 13).

Here in this chapter xvii. Christ continually refers to this gift:

“I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me” (xvii. 6).

“As Thou (God) hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him” (xvii. 2).

“I pray for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine” (xvii. 9).

“. . . . keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me” (xvii. 11).

“. . . . those that Thou gavest Me I have kept” (xvii. 12).

“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou has given Me, be with Me where I am” (xvii. 24).

All these comfortable verses bespeak a unity with the Father and the Son and a close sharing in the goal of that holy purpose.

Another repetitive word well worth study is “kept”. The believer has kept the words the Father gave the Son to proclaim and now the Son prays the Father to keep these disciples:

“I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil” (xvii. 15).

This prayer is to counter the expected attacks of Satan. Man can be expected to fall down on all the deceptions of the flesh: pride, lust for power and other selfish pursuits. But it is Satan who is at the back of false teaching in the churches, political ploys that undermine the character of the people, sapping their independence and their personal responsibility for the good of their home and children. It is Satan who is at the back of world politics that seek to channel all power into central units conveniently available for his representative at the right time. On the other hand Satan will especially attack those who are mature in the truth and who are proving useful to the Lord if they have failed to ‘put on the *whole* armour of God’ of Eph. vi. 11-17. It is especially this latter group for whom our Lord prays.

“I have manifested Thy Name” (xvii. 6).

Time was when a person’s name indicated some aspects of his or her character and Biblical names of people and places find their appropriate connotation in a concordance. The Lord Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry had concentrated on conveying to His hearers both the character and the work of His Father. So much is embraced in this text. How can folk sometimes say the Bible is difficult when on basic themes John summarizes it so simply and in such a telling way:

“I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me: and they have kept Thy Word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have

known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me” (xvii. 6-8).

These words insist on the authority of the Scriptures and we dare not ignore them if our lives are not to be wasted.

Finally let us consider verses 16-19:

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (xvii. 16-19).

Sanctification implies a division, a being separate from and being separated to. If we are to have the help of the Spirit of Truth then we have got to examine all our priorities, thoughts and as the Scriptures describe it, our ‘daily conversation’. We have to see that all these conform to the Lord’s spiritual standards. Something of this is sketched in Philippians iv. 8.

We have to earn our living and move through many sordid avenues of life. We have to let the light of Christ reflect in our words, life and habits. The Holy Spirit through prayer will show us the personal application of sanctification to our individual lives. What we need to remember is that our spiritual growth and understanding of the Bible will be retarded just as much as we allow into our lives aspects that we know too well are unacceptable to the Spirit of Christ within us.

No.18. Chapter xviii. pp. 136 - 139

“. . . . from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. iii. 15-17).

If we honour the Word of God, as we should, we shall always seek what is the purpose of a chapter or verse, what message it has to teach and how much of it can apply to ourselves. This indeed is the substance of the above exhortation. There is however another purpose of God, and that is to establish this record of His Word from the time of Adam’s creation to the close of the canon of Scripture. God has given us an authoritative account of world history that impinges on His eternal purpose. Man will be judged in resurrection as to how he has accepted or refused this record and how he has directed his life accordingly.

In the chapter (xviii.) of John’s Gospel at which we are now looking we have the historical record of the trial of the Lord Jesus. There have been those with a legal bent

who have pointed out the many undoubted irregularities of His trial. Let us look however at the reactions of some of those involved. Judas Iscariot, whether spurred by avarice or a mistaken thought to push our Lord into vindicating His claims, was nevertheless deceived by Satan. We need at all times to test our more important plans in quiet prayer with the question “does this meet the will of God or is it likely to offend?”. Peter for all his vehement brave intentions failed our Lord on that occasion. It is significant that the action of our Lord healing the ear of Malchus and the request in verse 8 to let His disciples go, saved them physically at that time, but the advent later of the Holy Spirit sealed the work of ‘keeping’ those the Father had given Him. We too can be protected and transformed like Peter if we allow the Spirit of Truth free rein in our minds and then in our lives. To read Peter’s epistles and in Acts, his stand against the Jewish rulers, is to make one astonished that this was the same supine man that stood in the court of the high priest. The priests Annas and Caiaphas appear to us to be all too reprehensible but the Apostle Paul graciously says:

“. . . . I bear them (Israel) record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth” (Rom. x. 2-4).

Our Lord charges them with the offence of not listening to and receiving His words that he had daily proclaimed in their buildings. These leaders were satiated with all their law and especially what their own colleagues, the rabbis had had to say about the law. They had had endless discussions on how to fulfil the law in all the intricacies they had loaded upon it. They had failed to see the purpose and righteousness of God behind the letter of the law. The tendency to rely on the dicta of past presumed authorities for Scriptural interpretation is evidenced in theological treatises from the early centuries onwards and even to today strangely enough. Let such ancient expressions of opinion be read with care. We have the Spirit of Truth at our side and with patience, faith and prayer we shall find that this is God’s planned way to teach us.

Pilate was unencumbered by the Jewish laws. He could no doubt see through the illegality and trickery of the priests. Pilate could find no fault in our Lord. The kingdom of which Christ came to be King, Pilate could see was of a kind and extent that did not touch his temporal responsibilities to Rome. We wonder how sincere was his question “What is truth?” (xviii. 38).

We do well to weigh up the words of Christ to Pilate:

“Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice” (xviii. 37).

Christ could at that solemn moment specify two vital purposes of His human birth and advent. (1) To be King of the Jews, and all those that could then, and will in the future, be involved in world discipleship and teaching. (2) To be a witness to the Truth. Those who “are of the truth” hear His voice. Faithful practice and inspired tuition seem to run

in tandem. Number (1) will have its time and great importance in the future (having failed at Christ's first advent). Number (2) is a witness we have to embrace and enter into in all its fullness. We do not need to turn away in hopelessness like Pilate saying "what is Truth?". We know that truth is the *full and accurate* knowledge about any subject. Only God Who created us, our minds and all the universe, can supply this knowledge. He alone knows all sides of a question. He alone knows the incidence of His spiritual creation on this material creation. He alone knows our thoughts and the necessary optimum way of bringing creation to its perfect goal. How we should bless God for the faithful witness of His Son to the Truth. How we should use and be thankful for this truth presented to us at such a price.

The arrest, trial and crucifixion of our Lord from the world's standpoint appears as a ministry with an ignoble failure at its close. We know that, by the foreknowledge of God and despite the work of the enemy, God overruled all the events so that they presented the precise, complete and righteous transaction that was the prophesied *basis* of salvation and redemption for the human race. Note we say *basis*, for we have to examine Paul's doctrinal epistle to the Romans to find all the implications of this transaction and to whom the transaction applies.

With this vital interpretation of Calvary in mind we note that God underlines His controlling part in these events to counter any talk of failure. The following words were recorded to emphasize this fact:

"Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father" (John x. 17, 18).

The chapter of John we are studying also makes its contribution to this theme:

"As soon then as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward and fell to the ground" (xviii. 6).

When previously in His ministry He was threatened with death, they had no power over Him—He walked away through the midst of them (see John viii. 59). Here in chapter xviii. He voluntarily lays down His life. At all times we can see how the Bible specifically records God's control over the world's events and especially over those which have a doctrinal significance in relation to His eternal purposes. This is seen particularly in the happenings during the 24 hours of the day of Calvary. Stuart Allen in his *The Unfolding Purpose of God* on pages 10 to 13 lists 14 prophecies from the O.T. written some 1,000 to 500 years before the events occurred and literally fulfilled on that day. Our next study covers the scene where our Lord takes the cup that the Father had given Him to drink (xviii. 11).

No.19. Chapter xix.
pp. 146 - 149

The title of these articles indicates that no attempt is made to give an exposition in depth that the Gospel deserves. Rather the author seeks to extract what to him seems the main burden of each chapter. Much has been written on the gross irregularities of the trial of the Lord Jesus, both in past years but also continuing up to the present time. There have been books and U.K. television seeking to remove some of the guilt from the Jewish race and to discredit the accuracy of the Biblical record. Accordingly one comes to realize how important are the Scriptures to present us today God's own miraculously preserved account of all that has happened in the world from the day He created it. When we say this we acknowledge that this historical account is strictly selective, touching only on events relative to God's eternal purpose.

Paul found it necessary to take the major part of the O.T. ("the law of Moses and the prophets") to do justice to the message of salvation in the Lord Jesus.

The first words recorded of Christ are "How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business"? (Luke ii. 49). Our Lord's last recorded words before He died were "It is finished" (John xix. 30). Thus it seems these words form the focus of this chapter.

When we studied chapter xvii. we saw that this work of the Father was conceived and started before the foundation or overthrow of the world in Gen. i. 1. The vital central act of the Son of God takes place in this chapter before us. The earthly life of the Lord Jesus led up to this point:

"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John iv. 34).

"But I have a greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me" (John v. 36).

"I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John xvii. 4).

Our Lord with His complete knowledge of the O.T. could see in His life one prophecy after another being fulfilled, and now as He hung on the cross, suffering, He saw them offering Him vinegar, the final prophecy concerning Him (while He was alive on earth) fulfilled:

". . . . And in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink" (Psa. lxix. 21).

Tasting, He did not drink, but said "It is finished".

To recapitulate, we see God using His written Word and His prophecies literally fulfilled, to bear witness before mankind of His existence, works, will and purpose. All

these are centred in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The visible earthly life of Christ and His witnessed resurrection are His eternal seal of truth to the record of the Bible.

When the Apostle Paul for two whole days went through with his compatriots the law of Moses and the prophets (Acts xxviii. 23) he would have shown prophecy after prophecy fulfilled. Paul would have shown to them, all the Temple ritual, furnishings and commandments prefiguring Christ as the great antitype. Paul's Master had already followed the same course of instruction with those two on the road to Emmaus:

“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke xxiv. 27).

While from one point of view, Christ could say “it is finished”, it is as well to consider what was finished and what resulted from this finished work: (1) The transaction on the cross was a foundation on which God could righteously cancel the sentence of death passed on all mankind by the sin of Adam. (2) Redemption (loosing us from the result of our sins) and atonement (making reconciliation and access to the Father) for those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and all that the Scriptures declare concerning His role of Saviour of mankind.

These two results are by no means all. They themselves are only a foundation if we dare to use the word ‘only’. We have constantly to review what we are building on this precious foundation. The epistle describing our calling to the church of the One Body delineates this foundation:

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the *foundation of the apostles and prophets*, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; In Whom ye are also builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. ii. 19-22).

Notice here again the reference to “apostles and prophets”.

The plans of God for the earth that went astray in the garden of Eden had already found rebellion in heaven. The work of Christ covered by (1) and (2) above is found to have additional and extended future results leading to the reinstatement of God's original desires and goal. View the hints of such in John's wonderful visions:

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. xi. 15).

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night” (Rev. xii. 7-10).

“And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; (the sphere of Satanic dominion); and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, it is done” (Rev. xvi. 17).

Note the echo “It is done” of that cry of our Saviour “It is finished”.

So we can begin to see how the events of John xix. cradle the most far reaching results affecting the universe and not merely our own world. It is on this wonderful and glorious foundation that God our heavenly Father has prepared the way for us to enter in spirit the household of God, concerning which our charter declares:

“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Eph. ii. 6, 7).

What a God is ours Who has cast His Word in such an irrefutable form for the believer, but a stumbling block to those who deliberately choose to turn away from the truth in disobedience. Faith in anything comes by the persuasion of another. Why should we not let God persuade us out of His Word to that faith in Christ that is the key to all the unimaginable spiritual blessings that the Scriptures envisage for us.

No.20. Chapter xx. pp. 196 - 200

This penultimate chapter (xx.) of John’s Gospel records the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, a supernatural event and one of more importance to the human race than any other event in the past or the future. Solomon was a man greatly blessed by God not only with wisdom but with possessions and power. Solomon had the time, inclination and endowment of mental faculties surpassing anyone before his time or since to pronounce on what man can do with this present life. Read Solomon’s report in Ecclesiastes. We quote three thought provoking verses:

“I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him” (Ecclesiastes iii. 14).

“Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun; because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it” (Ecclesiastes viii. 17).

“For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten” (Eccles. ix. 5).

The last verse must echo the conclusions of those who believe not on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and the record God the Father gave to the apostles to herald to the world.

The history of Israel in the wilderness is one of supernatural demonstrations by the hand of Moses of God's existence and power and purpose. Yet the people repeatedly ignored or forgot this supernatural testimony and rebelled. Paul writes ". . . . these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I Cor. x. 11). Let us not therefore think lightly on the resurrection of Christ but carefully ponder all the witness of the event and then all the implications that follow.

The witnesses of the Resurrection.

Paul is doing this very thing in I Cor. xv. where he gives a list of witnesses:

" He rose again *according to the Scriptures*: and that He was seen of Cephas (Peter), then of the twelve: after that, He was seen of above five hundred at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (I Cor. xv. 4-8).

One of the functions of the twelve apostles, including Matthias, was to witness to the resurrection. Their qualification was to have been with Him throughout His ministry so that they could testify that it was really He Who had risen. Christ says "Behold My hands and My feet that it is *I Myself*" (Luke xxiv. 39). Mary Magdalene coming from seeing the empty tomb recognizes His voice in the garden and exclaims Raboni—Master. John (that other disciple) sees the grave clothes in the tomb in the position that they would have been, wrapped round the body and separately round the head begins to perceive the miracle and reality of Christ's resurrection, emphasizing his witness he records ". . . . he saw, and believed" (John xx. 6-8). The chief priests and Pharisees suspecting trickery by the apostles had the tomb sealed and their own watchmen set, but all to no avail. Their failure merely highlights another aspect of witness to the event. The history of those times is silent as to any claims denying the event. Such denial is left to some in the present time who dare to confront all this testimony.

The Circumstances of the Resurrection.

We have already referred to John's discovery of what can only be described as a process of vanishing from human eyesight in rising from the dead. A similar process is evidence in verse 19 ". . . . the *doors were shut* came Jesus and stood in their midst". Again in verse 26 ". . . . the *doors being shut*, and stood in the midst". "Two went to Emmaus And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He *vanished* out of their sight" (Luke xxiv. 13-21).

Yet though He had the power of appearing and disappearing, He Himself reassures His disciples when they were affrighted at His sudden appearance: "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: *handle* Me and see; for a spirit hath not *flesh and bones*, as ye see Me have" (Luke xxiv. 37-40). Again in John xxi. 9 the Lord Jesus has a *meal* prepared for Peter in which presumably, our Lord was going to share.

It would seem we have a preview of the sort of resurrection body that awaits some at the return of our Lord at His second coming and which was foretold by Paul in I.Cor.xv.52: “We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”. Even as in that same chapter Paul reveals that there is more than one kind of resurrection body so we know that the Lord Jesus Christ had the power to first experience the resurrection hope of all His followers, of whatever dispensation or form it will take.

The raising of Lazarus has also an important bearing on the miracle of our Lord’s resurrection. In that incident there are all the elements of a demonstration of God’s power that excludes doubt or denial. Many witnesses knew that Lazarus had been dead four days and that, long after corruption in a hot climate had set in. Before the eyes of a crowd the sealing stone of the tomb is rolled away and at the *voice only* of the Son of God the dead one walks forth.

What are today’s scoffers of miracles to say to this? What are some in the churches today to say when they think to make the Bible acceptable by putting forward suggested natural explanations of miracles? Christ walking on the water only looked like it, there were hidden shallows! It was probably eczema not leprosy that Christ cured! If the miracle of the raising of Lazarus took place and if God raised His Son as described in the Word then surely we can accept the rest of the Bible with thankfulness. But if these two miracles are a fabrication, what is left to man? Is it as Solomon suggested “There is nothing better for a man, than he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour” (Eccles. ii. 24). Paul adds “If Christ be not raised we are of all men most miserable” (I Cor. xv. 17-19).

If the non-scientific person finds dematerialization difficult to conceive let him be comforted by the fact that scientists exploring the composition of matter begin to find it consists of electrical charges in a constant state of motion. We may well reconsider Paul’s words:

“God has chosen things which are not, to bring to nought things that are”
(I.Cor.i.27,28).

We stress the feature of resurrection for we all eventually come face to face with the thought “Is it all really true?” either in thinking of our own decease but more often that of a loved one we long to meet again and perhaps a cremation service confronts us. No wonder our great God in His love towards us provided such irrefutable proof for our comfort and assurance. This proof is undermined and destroyed by those who attack the inerrancy of the Bible. We cannot pick and choose what we shall accept as true. If we dishonour God’s Word by doubting it we cannot expect His Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth and the inexpressible joy of His presence.

The implications of the Resurrection.

The historic events leading up to the cross and after have no meaning to us today unless the Bible’s record is true and accepted. The transaction was planned and foretold

by God through the O.T. prophets. The recording of its happening was overruled by the Holy Spirit. Its meaning, interpretation and effect were committed to the N.T. apostles and especially to the Apostle Paul for us Gentiles. We do not need to speculate, His Word is clear. God has identified the events of Calvary with the believer:

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized (identified by faith—nothing to do with water) 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: Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more” (Rom. vi. 3-9).

Resurrection is the key to the approach from this life towards the presence of the Lord. God has planned and proclaimed that man’s faith and acceptance of this fact shall be the password to His presence:

“If thou shalt confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart *that God hath raised Him from the dead*, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. x. 9).

The Scriptures indicate three or more different hopes for believers according to their respective callings, even as there are three or more equivalent resurrections mentioned. The task to differentiate these in this article we will not attempt. The one sure thing to which we can all cling is that Christ by His death and resurrection has secured for all the true seed of Adam a resurrection, and if we have believed in the Saviour’s Name and His words, eternal life awaits us.

Israel in Numb. xiv. had all the evidence of the fruit and blessings of the promised land but refused the testimony of the “grapes of Eshcol” and God’s words of assurance and promise through Moses. All the rebellious and doubting adults were denied entrance to the promised land but their innocent children arrived there forty years later. Their rebellious parents changed their minds and decided to attack the enemy only to be heavily defeated, for the Lord was not with them. We have to learn to believe and accept God’s plans and in *His* time not just when we think we will. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” (Heb. ii. 3).

Praise be to God the Father and His blessed Son that our future is so secured.

No.21. Chapter xxi.
pp. 230 - 234

We have come to the end of a most wonderful record of the earthly life of the Son of God. John in modesty withholds his name in this narrative, calling himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (xxi. 20 and elsewhere). To this man was entrusted the book of the Revelation, a record to which the people of God will turn and anxiously consult for guidance and comfort in the terrible days ahead. To John also was entrusted this record of the earthly ministry of Christ having special reference to His being “God manifest in the flesh”.

The selection of incidents was made by the Holy Spirit, being given to John to record. In a similar way John in Rev. i. 10 speaks as being “in the spirit” and Paul in Heb. i. 2 speaks of God speaking “in Son”. The Word of God is the same miraculous testimony of God to man, as all the flowers, insects and especially his own body are a witness to man of the miraculous design of each for its purpose in life. So in this Gospel we find testimony to the power of God. In John xx. we considered the miracle of resurrection and we linked it with that of the raising of Lazarus. If we study the word ‘miracle’, the *dictionary* gives ‘a supernatural event’. In turn, ‘supernatural’ is “above or beyond nature”, and ‘nature’ is “the power that creates and regulates the world”! How reluctant is man to commit any praise or acknowledgment to God. Surely God has used forces He has created to produce results that further His purpose of the ages. Man however clever he is, has not yet discovered these forces and how they work and so he wriggles with these definitions, shying from equating *nature* with *God*.

John in his narrative was inspired to select eight miracles or signs to demonstrate the power of God through His Son. We quote them from page 77 of *Life Through His Name* by Mr. C. H. Welch.

- A | ii. 1-11. THE MARRIAGE IN CANA. The third day.
No wine. Glory manifested.
- B | iv. 43-52. THE NOBLEMAN’S SON.
After two days. At the point of death.
- C | v. 1-15. THE IMPOTENT MAN. Pool Bethesda. 38 years.
Sabbath. Sin.
- D | vi. 1-14. THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND.
The only sign (with *D*) recorded in other gospels.
- D | vi. 15-21. THE WALKING ON THE SEA.
The only sign (with *D*) recorded in other gospels.
- C | ix. 1-44. THE MAN BORN BLIND. Pool Siloam. From birth.
Sabbath. Sin.
- B | xi. 1-46. THE SISTERS’ BROTHER.
Two days. Lazarus is dead.
- A | xxi. 1-14. THE DRAUGHT OF FISHES. The third time.
No meat. The Lord manifested.

The arrangement of leaves on a plant's stalk; the pattern on the opposite wings of a butterfly display parallel design. The above structure and the more detailed analysis that follows in the book quoted exhibit similar parallel design. We believe God the overruling Architect of these His works purposely incorporated these literary parallels throughout His Word to prove to us their divine authorship.

What in this chapter has the Lord now in mind? None other than to see that His disciples carry His words to the world. So we find in John xxi. 16, 17 Christ appealing to Peter to feed the sheep—the mature, the lambs—the young in faith, and to shepherd -- or organize and supervise the church generally. The Lord says “feed My lambs feed My sheep”, and we know so many times in this Gospel our Lord uses the figure of bread, water, His flesh, His blood to represent His doctrine and His very presence in the heart of the believer. This is the specific work entrusted to Peter.

When Peter was converted or endowed with both the Holy Spirit and His gifts we discovered an entirely new Peter. Not one to hide behind lies but one who, utterly fearless, stood before the formidable Sanhedrin and testified to the risen Saviour. At Peter's first miracle, the lame man begging at the gate Beautiful, Peter declares:

“And His Name through faith in His Name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by Him hath given Him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (Acts iii. 16).

When we turn to Peter's second epistle we find a wonderful testimony to the Word of God:

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (II Pet. i. 16).

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For 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” (II Pet. i. 19-21).

Our Lord made use of three outstanding witnesses to His words, Peter, John and Paul. To Paul was entrusted the ministry of reconciliation between Jew and Gentile consequent upon the change of dispensation, and finally the gospel relative to the new calling, the church of the One Body.

What is the impact of the words of Christ on the world today? God has done His part supervising its original commitment to parchment and preserving it from attack for thousands of years, guiding the scribes of His people in making true copies. What have the churches done with it? From the time of Christ there have been faithful groups and individuals who have kept alive a faith and understanding of its message but speaking in general terms today there are sadly two features which are prevalent.

Firstly there are many evangelical movements who do such good work bringing a knowledge of the Saviour to men and then acknowledgment in their lives. But is the new born babe in Christ supplied with suitable nourishment from the Word that Peter was exhorted to supply in John xxi. 15? Have the sheep any qualified shepherds to feed the flock with the *meat* of the Word as Paul describes in I Cor. iii. 2? Secondly, in the list of church services how many are devoted to Bible Study? This duty of the church and all Christians is often neglected because the Old Testament accounts of the Flood and the Six days creation cannot be accepted in the light of the generally accepted statements of the origin of the universe.

The knowledge of the Bible is imperative in order to know God and His Salvation. The whole purpose of God is to receive worship from His creatures as our Lord told the woman at the well. "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in *truth*: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John iv. 23).

Can we really believe that God Who took such trouble to build a chain of communication with us would allow into His record stories of basic importance to be mere myths and legends? The critics of the Bible write as if it was Moses or Paul who were writing rather than that they were only the amanuenses for God. Because they have no satisfactory rational explanation of how God supervised His works of prophecy and history they are ready to discount much of the record, denying the divine authorship.

We have often heard it said and seen it written that in the O.T. *men were feeling* after God as if it was Moses and David etc. who were self inspired warriors carving out a conquered inheritance by their own imagination, design and power. It was God Himself Who spoke to these men, directing and encouraging them in their fight against the Canaanites and other nations of the evil seed of Satan. Consider an example of the awful practices of these nations which alas Israel and Judah so often copied.

"They (Judah) have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, *neither came it into My heart*" (Jer. xix. 5).

God planned and overruled the events making up the history of His people in the O.T. Needless to say this did not include their rebellion and constant disobedience and unfaithfulness towards His love and goodly provision for them. Every step taken by Abraham and his progeny we find taken by the specific instruction of God either directly to the individual or to His chosen prophet. Far from the people feeling after God, they repeatedly went against His commands, corrupting themselves in every way until at the end of their history we read:

"But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was *no remedy*" (II Chron. xxxvi. 16).

In the *Old Testament* as well as the New, God was a long suffering and patient God of love. Let those who think differently take the trouble to read all the O.T. and test the truth of these words. If a surgeon is forced to amputate a gangrenous limb to save the life

of the patient or the remainder of his body do we call him a blood thirsty butcher? The righteousness of God is a very precious thing to us. We should carefully examine every passage of Scripture that makes us doubt this very essential character of our heavenly Father.

Finally let us remember the Word of God all points to His desire that we should now and in resurrection live to willingly praise and acknowledge His righteous, holy and wise Headship that will call forth our eternal praise of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and that out of a full knowledge and experience.