

WRITINGS OF WILLIAM REID

by William Reid

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by William Reid, compiled for study and devotional reading.

78 Chapters

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01.00. The Blood of Jesus

The Blood of Jesus by The Rev. William Reid, M.A.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," Hebrews 10:19 [This is a reprint of a book published by James Nisbet & Co., London, England, in 1866]

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01.000. Preface

Preface

"I HAVE been religiously inclined from my earliest years. When quite little I was wont to say my prayers many times over, for I had heard it said that everything done on earth was written down in heaven, and I wished to have as much as possible recorded there in my favour.

"When about ten years of age, I heard that there were some who did not believe that the Bible was the Word of God, and that led me to surmise that it was not sufficiently clear that it was from God; for if He had given a revelation of His mind to man, it must have come in such a form that it would have been impossible for any person to disbelieve in it. I pictured to myself that if God chose to do it, He could put up in great letters along the heavens, 'I AM The Lord,' and everybody would see it and believe; and if the Bible were from Him, its revelation would be so unmistakably clear, that it would be impossible to doubt its divine origin.

"But this was not a settled conviction; and my incipient scepticism was suddenly dissipated by a dream. I thought that I felt an intense heat; and so terrible did it ultimately become, that the heavens were rent asunder and wrapt in flames, and in the burning sky overhead I saw in large letters of fire, 'I AM THE LORD;' but I had at the same time a conviction that it was now too late for the persons who had been unbelieving to profit by it, and those who had not believed the Bible, speaking, to them in the name of the Lord, would now find to their everlasting misery that it was true.

"Not having enjoyed an early training in Bible truth, I had many difficulties in reference to the doctrines of revelation, and especially regarding that of the Trinity. I could not comprehend whether God and Christ were one or two beings; and I was too timid at the age of twelve to ask my seniors.

"When at school I was deeply impressed with the solemnity and propriety of daily worship, and fervently wished, on returning home, to be able to have family worship; but my timidity was stronger than my convictions, and it was not attempted. Having no Christian friend to give me counsel, direction, and encouragement, my religious impressions by and by evaporated, and my character was left very much to the formative power of surrounding circumstances. But having been instructed when at school in a neighbouring town in what was right, and counselled, on leaving it, by a Christian lady of the town, as to how I ought to conduct myself on my return home, and being put in a responsible situation, I felt a moral weight upon my spirit, and gravitated towards the good, the right, and the true.

"I was much given to reading, and from having abundance of the choicest books of a historical and literary character, I was permitted to gratify my taste. The acquisition of information was my great aim. I had an ardent thirst for knowledge, and every species of works, with the exception of light literature, for which I had a settled contempt, was devoured by me both day and night. Solid literature suited my disposition, and I stored my mind with useful information on a variety of

subjects. I was once so engrossed with books, that when about fifteen years old I left off going to church, that I might have the quiet of the Lord's day for reading. But this I soon discovered to be very wrong, and it was discontinued.

"In the course of years I became acquainted with the most evangelical minister in the town where I resided; and I left an eloquent preacher, whose discourses were to me only 'a very lovely song,' and attended the ministry of the Gospel of the grace of God. This very materially changed the current of my thinking and the kind of my reading. Being naturally susceptible of religious impressions, I became serious, devout, and religious. I carried my thirst for knowledge with me into my religion, and I searched the Scriptures and read religious books with an earnestness and constancy which were absorbing. I got Fleetwood's 'Life of Christ' and read it many times; and so engrossing was it that I sometimes sat reading it until two or three o'clock in the morning, without weariness. The circumstances in which I was living, and the trials which thickened over my path, were no doubt instrumental in sobering my buoyant spirits and throwing me upon a course of religious duty.

"From the instructions of the pulpit, and my own reading, I soon became, in some measure, acquainted with the system of Christian doctrine; and believing that I was a real Christian because I knew about Christian truth and Christian experience, and had a liking for all that was good, I thought it was my duty to join myself to the church. I was quite able to answer all the questions that were put to me, for I was not asked, Are you born again? I was admitted, and, as a member, received the Lord's Supper regularly. Even at that time I walked a considerable distance every Lord's day to attend a prayer-meeting at eight o'clock in the morning; but it was all 'works,' for I felt as if I were acquiring extraordinary merit by the performance of this extraordinary duty. I had a real pleasure in doing well. After this I attended a Bible class, and prepared so thoroughly for it that I was able to outshine all the rest in my knowledge of the subjects which were submitted for our consideration. In order the more thoroughly to master the contents of the Scriptures, and satisfy my own mind, I set to reading the Bible with a Commentary; and after having read it with one commentary I got another, and perused it with the most assiduous earnestness and perseverance. With these helps I passed many hours in searching the Scriptures, and enjoyed it more than anything else ; but it was from no love to God himself, but simply to acquire information. I do not remember that I had a spiritual sense of sin, either before becoming a church-member, or for a number of years after doing so, and consequently I read the Bible more with my intellect than with my conscience and my heart. I wanted 'by searching' to 'find out God,' ignorant of the fact that He can be known only through our spiritual necessities. I saw the truth, as I believed, clearly enough, but never having been really convinced that I was an utterly lost sinner, I had never prayed from the heart, 'Lord, save me, I perish!'

"But in course of years I became less satisfied with my religion and with myself. When unhappy I did not go direct to Jesus, but, on the contrary, I tried to read myself right, or pray myself right, or work myself right, and for a time I succeeded. I was most strict in all my department, conscientious and exemplary; and having a factitious conscience, I felt miserable if I failed any day to read a good deal, or perform other duties. Morning calls often annoyed me, proving, as they frequently did, an interruption in my round of prescribed duty; and when I met with agreeable, intelligent friends, and went thoroughly into their conversation, I forgot all about divine things; and when I was left to myself again, after a time of forgetfulness of God, I sometimes felt that I had a

tremendous leeway to make up, and I set about doing it with all my might. When thus drawn away from religion, I would sometimes have a protracted season of forgetfulness of God, but it was generally followed by a season of conflict, remorse, struggling, and persevering penance. To keep up a religion on my plan was a very difficult matter, and very unsatisfactory. When I did well, read well, and stored up Scripture truth in my mind, did my duty as a Sunday school teacher, tract-distributor, and district-visitor, and was sufficiently earnest, I felt myself all right ; but if I failed in duty, I continued miserable.

"Being perfectly sincere and conscientious, consistent in my conduct, and considered truly pious by myself and others, - I waded on through this legal mire for many years; and it never occurred to me that there must be a radical defect about my religion. My heart was unsatisfied; my conscience, when in any measure awakened, was silenced by duty, but not satisfied by righteousness, nor purged from dead works by the blood of the Righteous One. My error was in believing that religion consisted in knowing, apart from realising; and my conscience not being spiritually aroused, I persevered in my delusion for about a dozen of years. I believe now that there was one error which I committed, which tended more than anything to keep me in my unhappy condition, - I considered my prayers so utterly unworthy to be presented to God, that instead of throwing myself in all my sinfulness and unworthiness before the throne of grace, and getting into immediate contact with the God of salvation, I employed exclusively the prayers of others. I frequently used ejaculatory prayers of my own throughout the course of the day; but when I came before God formally, I felt so utterly unworthy and unable to order my speech before Him, that I was always constrained to use the language of others ; for, praying being regarded as a meritorious duty, I felt that it must be done well in order to be accepted, and I feared to commit myself to a lengthened address to the Divine Majesty. The Holy Ghost would have helped my infirmities, and made intercession within me, but I had not the most remote conception that I might, by a believing glance of my eye towards heaven, secure His gracious aid; and so, instead of 'praying in the Holy Ghost,' I prayed merely in the words of my fellow-men, which sometimes met my condition, but more frequently did not, and always seemed to keep me at a distance from God, and from enjoying direct personal intercourse with 'the Father of mercies' (2 Corinthians 1:3).

"In the unsatisfactory manner which I have just described, I wasted and lost my young years, "and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,' (Mark 5:26). I had been religious, dutiful, and consistent; but it had been a mere going about to establish my own righteousness, for my system of service ignored the central fact of Divine Revelation, - that, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' (1 Timothy 1:15). 'But God, who is rich in mercy' (Ephesians 2:4), had compassion on me, and by the grace of His Holy Spirit, 'revealed His Son in me,' (Galatians 1:16) and turned 'the shadow of death into the morning,' (Amos 5:8). The first gleam of Gospel light which entered my darkened mind was in reading a little tract in which Luther's conversion is referred to. When the words of the Creed, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins,' were pronounced in his hearing, he took them up and repeated them on his bed of sickness; but he was told he must believe not only in the forgiveness of David's sins or Peter's sins, but that he must believe in the forgiveness of his own sins. This truth became the inlet of pardon and peace to his soul; and on reading it I felt that my soul was being visited with celestial light ; and I was led to see that pardon of sin was a present and personal blessing. But I was not satisfied that I believed aright.

"Shortly after, I was reading Romaine's 'Life of Faith,' and came upon this sentiment, -That the weakest believer is as precious to Christ and as safe as the strongest. The dayspring from on high visited me, and, by and by, I felt myself bathed in the noon-tide radiance of Heaven's glorious light. The great Enlightener filled my soul with His transforming presence. He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness had shined in my heart 'to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' I was conscious of a Divine Presence with me, and believed that the holy light which had entered my soul came direct from heaven. Christ from that moment became the great central object of my contemplation. Immediately that I became enlightened, Jesus appeared to be the centre, sum, and essence of Revelation, and with Him as a key, I thought I could understand all that ever was written on the subject of religion. My spirit rejoiced in God my Saviour, and self and its services were thought of only to be condemned as utterly vile and worthless. Christ was all. And as my soul was filled with divine light, and glowing with the love of Jesus, I said to myself, as, in amazement, I remembered the dreary past - 'How could I have been so blind as not to see the way of salvation when it is so clearly revealed that "Jesus Christ is all and in all, and we are complete in Him" - not, "in Him" and our own doings combined but in Him alone? The truth is as clear as the sun at noon-day, that Jesus is Himself the Sin-Bearer and the Saviour, and I and my legal duties and conscientious penances are nothing but "filthy rags." I have read it a hundred times that Jesus came "to seek and to save that which was lost," and the same truth runs through the whole Word of God, and yet I never saw it until now. Oh, how blind I have been to the glory of Jesus! How sad to think that I have read so much about Him with the veil upon my heart, and have never seen His glory as a Saviour till this blessed hour!' I now wished that every one could see the Lord as I saw Him. I wondered that they did not, and I thought I could point Him out to them so clearly and distinctly, as made of God unto us 'wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,' that it would be impossible for them not to believe in Him, receive Him as theirs, and be filled with heavenly joy: but I found that old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon.'

"About this time I heard a sermon which I wished to get good from; but the minister was drawing to a close, and I had found nothing in all he had said to satisfy my soul, when as a concluding sentence he repeated the words, 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth' (Romans 10:4); and that was borne in upon my soul with much power of the Holy Ghost, so that I again found my heart filled with the light, life, and love of God. How clearly it appeared to me that Christ had in my stead satisfied all the demands of the law! He had filled it up with His satisfaction from one end to the other, for thus I understood His being, 'the end of the law.' He has abolished the law as a ground of justification, by fulfilling every one of its many demands; and He allows us to begin life with a righteousness as perfect as if we had fulfilled perfectly in our own persons every iota that the law of God exacts. I had no idea of this during my years of bondage; and the consequence was, that in my blindness I presumptuously set about doing that which Christ had done for me, and which, had I gone on for ever in the same legal track, I never could have done for myself. When one's eyes are opened by the Holy Ghost, how monstrous does it seem for the sinful creature to have been attempting to work out a righteousness which could be effected only by the Creator! 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,' and, believing in Jesus, I found that, instead of needing to begin to fulfil the law for myself, I was privileged to begin at 'the end of the law.' Instead of looking forward to being able to complete the fulfillment, I found that (on believing in Jesus) what I fancied would be the termination

of a life of obedience, I had now presented to me in the Gospel of Christ as the point from which I was to start. To get Christ in a moment as my perfect righteousness, after going about for the best part of my past life to establish a righteousness of my own, on account of which I hail vainly thought to render myself acceptable to God, that was to me 'as life from the dead,' (Romans 11:15). Is that my own experience? No, it is not mine; but the experience of another, which, having been submitted to me when about to write this preface, I considered so suitable that I have written it out, and given it as one of the most satisfactory reasons I could present for issuing the present little volume. There can be no doubt but there are many cases like the above. I fear that not a few of the strictly religious in all our churches are ignorant of the "true grace of God," (1 Peter 5:12), which gives Jesus as "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." I fear also that, in some cases, on account of a mixture of law and Gospel in public instruction, inquirers are left with the impression that they have something to do in order to obtain "justification of life," (Romans 5:18). And when we consider the hundreds of thousands who are being awakened by the Holy Ghost throughout our own and other lands, I believe that we could not engage in a more needful service than the preparation of a work such as the present, wherein "the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe," (Romans 3:21-22). We sometimes hear "the claims of Jesus " pressed upon sinners; but this is to confound Christ with Moses, and represent His salvation as only an amended republication of the law "given by Moses," forgetting that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," (John 1:17). "The Gospel, strictly taken, contains neither 'claims,' commands, nor threatenings, but is glad tidings of salvation to sinful men through Christ, revealed in doctrines and promises; and these revealed to men as sinners, stout-hearted, and far from righteousness. In the good news from heaven of help in God through Jesus Christ, for lost, self-destroyed creatures of Adam's race, there are no precepts. All these, the command to believe and repent not excepted, belong to and flow from the law. The Gospel is the report of a peace purchased by the BLOOD OF CHRIST for poor sinners, and offered to them. The Gospel brings a sound of liberty to captives, of pardon to condemned criminals, of peace to rebels, a sound of life to the dead, and of salvation to them that lie on the borders of hell and condemnation. It is not, indeed, the Gospel of itself, but Christ revealed therein, that heals the sinner. It is Christ that is to be received; but He is received as offered in the Gospel, and the Gospel holds out Christ to the eye of faith. The Gospel is with respect to Christ what the pole was with respect to the serpent. The Gospel does not therefore urge upon us claims which we cannot implement, but it places before us the free grace of God in Christ Jesus, and permits us to claim the Son of God as our Redeemer, and through Him to enjoy "all things" pertaining to the life of faith and the hope of glory. We are asked to give God nothing for salvation. He is the great Giver. Our proper position is to stand before Him as beggars in the attitude of receiving. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). THE Gospel of the grace of God does not consist in pressing the duty defined by the words, "Give your heart to Christ" although that is often unwisely pressed upon inquirers after salvation as if it were the Gospel; but the very essence of the Gospel is contained in the words, "Having liberty to enter into the holiest BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high-priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith," (Hebrews 10:19-22).

"Give your heart to Christ," is rather law than Gospel. It is most proper that it should be done, for God himself demands it; but merely urging the doing of it is far short of the Gospel. The true Gospel is, Accept the free gift of salvation from wrath and sin by receiving Jesus himself, and all the benefits He purchased with "HIS OWN BLOOD" (Acts 20:28), and your heart will be His in a moment, being given to Him, not as a matter of law, but of love; for, if you have the love of His heart poured into yours by His blessed Spirit, you will feel yourself under the constraining influence of a spontaneous spiritual impulse to give Him in return your heart, and all that you possess. It is right to give Him your heart, but unless you first receive His, you will never give Him yours. The design of the following pages is to exhibit "the true grace of God" "without the works of the law," and only "by THE BLOOD OF Jesus," (Hebrews 10:19). Our great aim is the glory of Christ in the conversion of souls and the means employed to accomplish that end are simple statements concerning the great Scripture truth, that we are saved at once, entirely, and for ever, by the grace of God "who is rich in mercy," and that we have no part at all in the matter of our salvation save the beggar's part, of accepting it as a " free gift," procured for us by "THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST," (1 Peter 1:19). And, as many are struggling to get up something of their own as a price to bring to God to buy salvation of Him, we have taken pains to shew the entire uselessness of all such efforts; and have pointed out, we think, with some degree of clearness, and by a variety of ways, that all true religion has a distinct beginning, and that that beginning dates from the time when a sinner stands at Calvary conscious of his utterly ruined condition, and realises the truth that Jesus so completely satisfied God for sin, that He could say before He gave up the ghost, "It is finished," (John 19:30); so that " we have redemption through HIS BLOOD, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," (Ephesians 1:7). "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," (1 Peter 2:24), and thereby, "having made peace by THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS," (Colossians 1:20), we may at once be "made nigh by THE BLOOD OF CHRIST," (Ephesians 2:13), without anything of our own. That God who hath set Him forth, "a propitiation through faith in HIS BLOOD, to declare his righteousness " (Romans 3:25) in pardoning sin, will pardon ALL sin through faith in Him, for His own testimony is, that "THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST His Son cleanseth us from all sin," (1 John 1:7).

"THE BLOOD OF JESUS" is the ground of peace with God to every believing sinner below, and it will be the subject of the everlasting song of the redeemed above. It is our ALL for acceptance with God, for pardon of sin, for "justification of life," for adoption into God's family, for holiness and glory. As the altar with its streaming blood stood at the very entrance of the ancient tabernacle, so the Lord Jesus Christ and "THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS" meet us at the very entrance of the church of the redeemed. The blood-shedding of Jesus as "a propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2) lies at the very threshold of the Christian life. It is the alphabet of Christian experience to know the value of "THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING," (Hebrews 12:24). The first step in the Christian course is into the "fountain opened," (Zechariah 13:1). THE BLOOD OF JESUS" is our great and only theme in the following pages. May the Divine Spirit make them to every reader "the power of God unto salvation," (Romans 1:16). In closing these prefatory pages, the writer may remark, that although it would have been both easy and delightful to have written it wholly himself, he has purposely introduced extracts from various writers belonging to different sections of the Church of Christ-Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, &c., that the anxious inquirer may enjoy the benefit of having saving truth presented to him in a variety of aspects, and may, at the same time, feel the moral effect of observing the perfect agreement of Spirit-taught Christians, in

the different branches of the Church of Christ, with regard to the one way of a sinner's acceptance with God, " BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS."

It is again issued with the earnest prayer that the Holy Spirit would so bless it to all inquirers who read it, that they may "enter into the holiest by THE BLOOD OF JESUS," (Hebrews 10:19), and learn to sing, "with joyful lips," the redemption-song: - Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His OWN BLOOD, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen,," (Revelation 1:5-6).

3 George Square, Edinburgh

January 1863

01.01. Forgiveness of Sins

Forgiveness of Sins Through the Blood of Jesus Topics In This Chapter:

* Forgiveness To Be Obtained Now

* Forgiveness Necessary At The Outset

* Forgiveness The Spring Of Devotedness THE GOD OF LOVE, dear reader, in His written Word, which gives an account of the rich mercy He has provided for the guilty, tells you that you may be saved. His Word assures you that you may be saved from guilt, sin, and wrath. And that Word also informs you that your salvation depends not on anything you may do, but on what God has already done. Good news about God have reached our world, and in believing these glad tidings. you shall be saved. This is the good news, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," (Romans 5:8). "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," (John 3:16). "Christ died for the ungodly," (Romans 5:6). "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," (2 Corinthians 5:21). If, by simply believing the good news about what God through Christ hath done for sinners, we become "partakers of Christ," (Hebrews 3:14), and are "accepted in the Beloved," (Ephesians 1:6), it will become matter of personal consciousness and spiritual joy that "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace," (Ephesians 1:7). "Be it known unto you therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things," (Acts 13:38).

I beseech you to settle it in your mind that "forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38) lies at the very threshold of the Christian life. It is a blessing, needed and obtainable now. You must have forgiveness, or perish for ever; you must have it now, or you cannot have peace. It is surely a most delightful thought that you may have the guilt of all your past sins blotted out at once and for ever! God pardons freely and at once. He does not inculcate any preparation in order to pardon. One who knew the blessedness of enjoying His pardoning mercy testifies thus concerning it: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," (1 John 1:9); and this testimony was given on the ground of what he had affirmed in the same letter, that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). He does not say, After you have repented more thoroughly, after you have spent days and weeks in agonising prayer, after you become more thoroughly instructed in divine things, and after you pass through years of "trouble and sorrow," then you may venture to hope for forgiveness. No; but, knowing that Christ died to put away sin, you are warranted, on simply taking the place of a sinner, and accepting of Jesus as your Saviour, to believe that, through the all-perfect merits of Christ, you are pardoned that very moment, and enjoy perfect peace with God; for God "justifieth the ungodly," (Romans 5:5).

Peace with God through the forgiveness of all your sins may thus be obtained at any moment, seeing that you do not have to repent for it, work for it, or wait for it, but simply believe what God says regarding Christ "having made peace by the blood of his cross," (Colossians 1:20). "And being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24), - and being, fully satisfied that your sin has been forgiven you in a righteous way, being put away by "the precious blood of Christ," (1 Peter 1:19) - God being "well pleased for his righteousness' sake," (Isaiah 42:21)-"just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus," (Romans 3:26) - "peace that passeth all understanding" (Php 4:7) will spring up spontaneously within your soul, like the fresh, flowing current of a perennial fountain. In reference to the pardon of your sins, there is no time to be lost, for "the Holy Ghost saith, To-day," (Hebrews 3:7); and were you now refusing to listen, and dying in your sins ere tomorrow's sun arose, you would inevitably perish eternally, notwithstanding your conviction of sin, and anxieties of soul; for Jesus himself assures us that "he that believeth not shall be damned," (Mark 16:16). Besides, you can do nothing else that will prove satisfactory to yourself, or well-pleasing to God, until you have obtained the forgiveness of your sins. And as pardon of sin is the first thing that you feel in need of, so it is the first thing which is presented by the God of love for your acceptance; for God is still to be found "in Christ reconciling sinners unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," (2 Corinthians 5:19). Moreover, you will have your whole life and character affected in a most striking way by the scripturalness or unscripturalness of the views you now entertain of "the God of all grace," (1 Peter 5:10), and the heartiness or hesitancy with which you embrace His pardoning mercy. As a man's position in the world is very materially affected by the character of his elementary education and early training, so is the position of even true believers in Christ materially affected not only in this world, but in the world to come, by their being thoroughly grounded or not grounded in the great elementary truths of the Gospel of the grace of God, which preaches present pardon and immediate peace "to every one that believeth," (Romans 1:16). Your position, as well as destiny for time and for eternity, are now to be determined! It is, therefore, of the last importance that you should have thoroughly scriptural views and an intelligent experience of the grace of God as it is manifested to you, a sinner, in the person and work of His Son Jesus Christ. And again, the character of your service for God, and your success in winning souls, will very greatly depend upon the clearness with which you realise your own salvation through the blood of Christ at the commencement of your Christian course; for how could you labor faithfully to bring others to feel the constraining power of the love of Christ, unless you yourself felt assured that He had loved you personally and put away your sin? The most useful life must ever be that which is firmly based on a knowledge of Christ crucified as the sole ground of acceptance with God, and on being justified, and having peace "through our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us," (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10). It will be found that those who do most for God and their fellow-sinners are such as the Rev. Robert McCheyne, who knew himself to be forgiven by God and safe for eternity-of whom his biographer says, that "he walked calmly in almost unbroken fellowship with the FATHER and the SON" and who himself thus describes his own undoubted conversion in the only record he has left of it:-

"When free grace awoke me, by light from on high
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die;
No refuge, no safety in self could I see-
Jehovah Tsidkenu* my Saviour must be.
My terrors all vanish'd before the sweet name,
My guilty fears vanish'd, with boldness I came
To drink at the Fountain, life-giving and free
Jehovah Tsidkenu is all things to me."

*Translation: the Lord our Righteousness

01.02. How our Sins are taken away

How our Sins are taken away by the Blood of Jesus Topics In This Chapter:

- * Jesus The Taker-Away Of Sin For The World
- * Jesus Answers All The Claims Of Justice
- * Jesus Takes Away Our Sins Freely

THERE IS EVERY REASON why you should now intelligently and believingly behold the Lamb of God, "which taketh away the sin of the world," (John 1:29). You are not directed in this passage to a Saviour who has already "taken away the sin of the world," but to Him who "taketh away the sin of the world." The meaning plainly is, that Jesus is the God appointed Taker-away of sin for the world. We find him asserting this, when He says, The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins" (Matthew 9:6); "All power" (or authority) "is given me in heaven and on earth," (Matthew 28:18). Jesus is the only and the all-sufficient, as He is the authorised Taker-away of sin, for the world at large. The whole world is brought in guilty before God, "for all have sinned," (Romans 3:23); and the true gospel of God is, that when any one belonging to our sinful world feels his sin to be oppressive, and comes straight to "the Lamb of God" with it, and frankly acknowledges it, and tells out his anxieties regarding it, and his desire to get rid of it, he will find that Jesus has both the power and the will to take it away; and on seeing it removed from him by "the blood of His cross," (Colossians 1:20), "as far as the east is from the west," (Psalms 103:12), he will be enabled to sing with a grateful heart and "joyful lips:"

"I lay my sins on Jesus, The spotless Lamb of God; He bears them all, and frees us From the accursed load."

You can never make an atonement for your past sins, nor by personal obedience procure a title to the inheritance of glory; but Jesus is willing to take away all your sins, and to give you His own title to the glorious kingdom, if you will only consent to intrust Him alone with your salvation.

"Well," you may perhaps resolve, "I will go to Him, and cast myself upon His mercy, and if I perish, I perish." Ah, but you need not go to Him in that spirit, for it throws a doubt upon the all-sufficiency of His completed atonement for sin, and His perfect, spotless life of obedience.

Jesus himself says, " God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," (John 3:16). These being the " true sayings of God," (Revelation 19:9), where, O friend, is there the least cause for you saying, with hesitancy and doubt "If I perish, I perish?" (Esther 4:16). The proper thought you ought to have in reference to the glorious Gospel is this - God has so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son to die for sinners, and He assures me that if I, a perishing sinner, believe in Him, I shall not perish, but have everlasting life; I believe His Word, and reckon that if He gave His Son to die for us when we were yet sinners, He will with Him also freely give us all such things as pardon and purity, grace and glory; and if, in accordance with His own gracious invitation, I rest my soul upon

His manifested love in Christ Jesus, I believe that it will be as impossible for me to perish, as for God to change His nature, or to cancel the word of grace and truth, that the " blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin," (1 John 1:7).

God the Father loved sinners so much as to send Jesus to die for them. Jesus loved sinners so much as to lay down His life for their redemption. The Holy Spirit loves sinners so much that He has written a record of God's manifested love to them in Jesus Christ, and He Himself has come down in person, to reveal that love to their souls, that they may be saved. And if you, O anxious one, will now agree to God's method of transferring all that Divine justice demands of you to Jesus, "who was made of a woman, made under the law," who perfectly obeyed and pleased the Father in His holy life, and in death endured and exhausted the penalty due to sin, you will obtain pardon, peace, grace, and holiness; the full tide of the love of God, which passeth knowledge, will flow into your soul, and, in the spirit of adoption, you will cry, "Abba, Father," (Galatians 4:6), feel the constraining influence of the love of Christ, and live to the glory of "Him who died for us and rose again." That I may make the method of a sinner's salvation so "plain, that he that readeth it" (Habakkuk 2:2) may have his mind's eye so full of its meaning, "that he may run" at once to Jesus Christ, as his Divine sin-bearer, I will present the following homely and unmistakable illustration :-While standing, one day on the platform of the Aberdeen Station of the North-Eastern Railway, I observed a carriage with a board on it intimating that it ran all the way from Aberdeen to London. The doors of it were open, the porters were putting passengers' luggage on the top of it, and a few individuals were entering, or about to enter, its different compartments. They looked for this particular carriage as soon as they had passed through the ticket-office, and on seeing "London" on it, they threw in their traveling-rugs, entered, and, seating themselves, prepared for the journey.

Having furnished themselves with tickets and railway guides, and satisfied themselves that they were in the right carriage, they felt the utmost confidence and I did not observe any one of them coming out of the carriage, and running about in a state of excitement, calling to those around them, "Am I right? am I right?" Nor did I see any one refusing to enter, because the carriage provided for only a limited number to proceed by that train. There might be 80,000 inhabitants in and around the city; but still there was not one who talked of it as absurd to provide accommodation for only about twenty persons, for practically it was found to be perfectly sufficient. Trains leave the city several times a-day, and it is found that one carriage for London in the train is quite sufficient for the number of passengers; and on the particular day to which I now refer, I noticed, that so ample was the accommodation, that one of the passengers had a whole compartment to himself. The carriage is for the whole city and neighbourhood, but carries only such of the inhabitants as come and seat themselves in it from day to day.

God, in His infinite wisdom, has made provision of a similar kind for our lost world. He has provided a train of grace to carry as many of its inhabitants to heaven, the great metropolis of the universe, as are willing to avail themselves of the gracious provision. When we call you by the preaching of the gospel, the meaning is, that all who will may come, and, passing through the booking-office of justification by faith alone, seat themselves in a carriage marked, "From Guilt to Glory." Whenever you hear the free and general offer of salvation, you need not stand revolving the question in your own mind, "Is it for me ?" for just as the railway company carry all who comply with their printed regulations, irrespective of moral character, so if you come to the station of grace at the advertised time, which is " now,"-for "Behold now is the accepted time," (2 Corinthians

6:2),-you will find the train of salvation ready; and the only regulation to be complied with by you, in order to your being carried by it, is that you consent to let the Lord Jesus Christ charge Himself with paying for your seat, - which cannot surely be anything but an easy and desirable arrangement, seeing you have no means of paying for yourself. Were you coming to the railway-station with no money in your pocket, and anxious to travel by a train about to start, in order to be put in possession of a valuable inheritance left to you by a friend; and were any one to meet you at the door of the ticket-office, and say, "I will pay your fare for you," you would not feel anything but the utmost satisfaction in complying with such a regulation; and is it not an easy matter for you on coming to the station of mercy to submit to the regulation of the gospel, to let Jesus pay your fare for the train of grace, that you may take your seat with confidence, and be carried along, the new and living way to everlasting glory?

If we want to know the gospel and be saved, we must know Jesus as our Sin-bearer; for "Christ crucified is the sum of the gospel and the richness of it. Paul was so taken with Jesus that nothing sweeter than Jesus could drop from his pen and lips. It is observed that he hath the word Jesus five hundred times in his epistles "(Charnock 1684) "Jesus" was his constant subject of meditation, and out of the good treasure of the heart his mouth spoke and his pen wrote. He felt that Christ was made of God unto him "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," (1 Corinthians 1:30), and glorying in the Lord and in His cross, he determined not to know anything among those to whom he preached and wrote, " save Jesus Christ and Him crucified," (1 Corinthians 2:2). That faith which is not built on a dying Christ is but a perilous dream: God awaken all from it that are in it!

Christ alone is our salvation- Christ the rock on which we stand; Other than this sure foundation Will be found but sinking sand.

Christ, His cross and resurrection, Is alone the sinner's plea; At the throne of God's perfection, Nothing else will set him free.

"We have all things, Christ possessing; Life eternal, second birth; Present pardon, peace, and blessing, While we tarry here on earth; And by faith's anticipation, Foretastes of the joy above, Freely given us with salvation, By the Father in His love.

"When we perfect joy shall enter, 'Tis in Him our bliss will rise; He's the essence, soul, and centre Of the glory in the skies: In redemption's wondrous story, (Plann'd before our parents' fall), From the Cross unto the Glory.

Jesus Christ is all in all"

01.03. Blood of Jesus, Not Conviction of Sin, Foundation of our Peace

Blood of Jesus, Not Conviction of Sin, Foundation of our Peace Topics In This Chapter:

- * Conviction Not To Be Desired As An End
- * Christ Bore Our Sin On The Cross

IF THE HOLY GHOST be awakening you to a true apprehension of your danger as a rebel against God's authority,-a guilty, polluted, hell-deserving sinner,-you must be in a deeply anxious state of mind, and such questions as these must be ever present with you , -"What must I do to be saved? What is the true ground of a sinner's peace with God ? What am I to believe in order to be saved ?" Well, in so far as laying the foundation of your reconciliation is concerned, I wish you to observe that you have nothing to do ; for the Almighty Surety of sinners said on Calvary, "It is finished.," (John 19:30). Jesus has done all that the Holy Jehovah deemed necessary to be done to insure complete pardon, acceptance, and salvation to all who believe in His name. If you take Jesus as your Saviour, you will build securely for eternity. " For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," (1 Corinthians 3:11). He is the foundation-stone of salvation laid by God himself, and on His finished atoning work alone you are instructed to rest the salvation of your soul, and not on anything accomplished by you, wrought in you, felt by you, or proceeding from you. It is of the last importance to be clear as to the fact that it is the work of Christ without you, and not the work of the Spirit within you, that must form the sole ground of your deliverance from guilt and wrath, and of peace with God. You must beware of resting your peace on your feelings, convictions, tears, repentance, prayers, duties, or resolutions. You must begin with receiving Christ, and not make that the termination of a course of fancied preparation. Christ must, be the Alpha and Omega, He must be EVERYTHING in our salvation, or He will be nothing. Beware lest you fall into the common mistake of supposing that you will be more welcome to accept of Christ that you are brought through a terrible process of "law-work." You are as welcome to Christ now as you will ever be. Wait not for deeper convictions of sin, for why should you prefer conviction to Christ ? And you would not have one iota more safety although you had deeper convictions of sin than any sinner ever had.

Convictions of sin are precious ; but they bring no safety, no peace, no salvation, no security, but war, and storm, and trouble. It is well to be awakened from sleep when danger is hanging over us ; but to awake from sleep is not to escape from danger. It is only to be sensible of danger, nothing more. In like manner, to be convinced of your sins is merely to be made sensible that your soul is in danger. It is no more. It is not deliverance. Of itself, it can bring no deliverance ; it tells of no Saviour. It merely tells us that we need one. Yet there are many who, when they have had deep convictions of sin, strong terrors of the law, congratulate themselves as if all were well. They say, 'Ah, I have been convinced of sin; I have been under terrors; it is well with me; I am safe.' Well with you ? Safe ? Is it well with the seaman when he awakes and finds his vessel going to pieces upon

the rocks amid the fury of the whelming surge? Is it well with the sleeper when he awakes at midnight amid the flames, of his dwelling? Does he say, 'Ah, it is well with me; I have seen the flames?' In this way sinners are not unfrequently led to be content with some resting-place short of the appointed one. Anxiety to have deep convictions, and contentment with them after they have been experienced, are too often the means which Satan uses for turning away the sinner's eye from the perfect work of Jesus, who himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Our peace with God, our forgiveness, our reconciliation, flow wholly from the sin-atonement sacrifice of Jesus.

Behold, then, O Spirit-convinced soul, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world! In His death upon the cross, behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world! In His death upon the cross, behold the mighty sacrifice, the ransom for the sins of many! See there the sum of all His obedience and sufferings! Behold the finished work!--a work of stupendous magnitude, which He alone could have undertaken and accomplished ! Behold our sacrifice, our finished sacrifice, our perfected redemption, the sole foundation of our peace, and hope, and joy. 'He His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree,' (1 Peter 2:24). It is not said that our duties, or our prayers, or our fastings, or our convictions of sin, or our repentance, or our honest life, or our alms deeds, or our faith, or our grace--it is not said that these bore our sins; it was Jesus, Jesus himself, Jesus alone, Jesus, and none but Jesus, 'bore our sins in His own body on the tree.' Rest, then, in nothing short of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Christ has done the mighty work; Nothing left for us to do, But to enter on His toil, Enter on His triumph too. His the labour, ours the rest; His the death, and ours the life; Ours the fruits of victory, His the agony and strife."

01.04. A Letter about the Blood of Jesus

A Letter about the Blood of Jesus Topics In This Chapter:

* What Is Justification?

* Looking Unto Jesus, We Can Die In Peace AN EMINENT AUTHOR¹ wrote to a dying man, " I urge you to cast yourself at once, in the simplest faith, upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. All your true preparation for death is entirely out of yourself, and in the Lord Jesus. Washed in His blood, and clothed upon with His righteousness, you may appear before God divinely, fully, freely, and for ever accepted. The salvation of the chief sinners is all prepared, finished, and complete in Christ, (Ephesians 1:6; Colossians 2:10). Again, I repeat, your eye of faith must now be directed entirely, out of and from yourself, to JESUS. Beware of looking for any preparation to meet death in yourself. It is all in Christ. God does not accept you on the ground of a broken heart-or a clean heart-or a praying heart-or a believing heart. He accepts you wholly and entirely on the ground of the ATONEMENT Of His blessed Son. Cast yourself, in childlike faith, upon that atonement-' Christ dying for the ungodly,' (Romans 5:6) - and you are saved! Justification is a poor, law-condemned, self-condemned, self-destroyed sinner, wrapping himself by faith in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'which is unto all, and upon all them that believe,' (Romans 3:22). He, then, is justified, and is prepared to die, and he only, who casts from him the garment of his own righteousness, and runs into this blessed 'City of Refuge' - the Lord Jesus - and hides himself there from the 'revenger of blood,' exclaiming, in the language of triumphant faith, 'There is NOW NO CONDEMNATION to them that are in Christ Jesus,' (Romans 8:1). Look to Jesus, then, for a contrite heart -look to Jesus for a clean heart-look to Jesus for a believing heart-look to Jesus for a loving heart-and Jesus will give you all. One faith's touch of Christ, and one divine touch from Christ, will save the vilest sinner. Oh, the dimmest, most distant glance of faith, turning its languid eye upon Christ, will heal and save the soul. God is prepared to accept you in His blessed Son, and for His sake He will cast all your sins behind His back, and take you to glory when you die. Never was Jesus known to reject a poor sinner that came to Him empty and, with 'nothing to pay.' God will glorify His free grace in your salvation, and will therefore save you, just as you are, 'without money and without price,' (Isaiah 65:1). I close with Paul's reply to the anxious jailer, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' (Acts 16:31). No matter what you have been, or what you are, plunge into the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness,' (Zechariah 13:1), and you shall be clean, 'washed whiter than snow,' (Psalms 51:7). Heed no suggestion of Satan, or of unbelief. Cast yourself at the feet of Jesus, and if you perish, perish there! Oh no! perish you never will, for He hath said, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,' (John 6:37). 'Come unto ME,' (Matthew 11:28), is His blessed invitation ; let your reply be, 'Lord, I come! I come! I come! I entwine my feeble, trembling arms of faith around Thy cross, around Thyself, and if I die, I will die, cleaving, clinging, looking unto Thee!' So act and believe, and you need not fear to die. Looking at the Saviour in the face, you can look at death in the face, exclaiming with good old Simeon, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,' (Luke 2:29). May we, through rich, free, and sovereign grace, meet

in heaven, and unite together in exclaiming, 'Worthy is the Lamb; for He was slain for us!'" (Revelation 5:12).

"How glorious Is THY NAME Through all the ransom'd host, O WORTHY LAMB, who came To seek and save the lost!

Thou art, beyond compare, Most precious in our sight! Than sons of men more fair, And infinite in might!

Thy perfect work divine Makes us for ever blest; Here truth and mercy shine, And men with God do rest."

Footnotes:

1Some time ago, the Rev. Dr Winslow of Bath received a letter from a youth, apparently near death, asking him to reply to it in the columns of our periodical, which he did, and the above quotation contains the most important part of his reply. The subjoined are Dr Winslow's note to the author, and the youth's interesting note to Dr. Winslow:-

"MY DEAR SIR,-A few days ago, I received the following note. Will you allow a brief reply to the all-important question it contains, through the columns of your wide. spread and most useful journal? I write hurriedly, and on a journey, but I will endeavour to make the apostle's reply to the awakened jailor my model for point and conciseness. And oh may the same Divine Spirit apply the answer with like immediate and saving result!- " 'TO THE REV. DR. WINSLOW,

" 'DEAR SIR, - You would greatly oblige a sinner, if you would write a piece....for September, and tell him what he must do to prepare to die-what is the preparation required by God - and when he is fit to die. By your doing so, you will greatly oblige a young person person who feels that his time is short in this world. Now what is justification? And when is a sinner justified?'"

01.05. Salvation through the Blood of Jesus, The Gift of God

Salvation through the Blood of Jesus, The Gift of God Topics In This Chapter:

- * Saved Only by the Love and Mercy of God
- * Invited to Lay Hold of a Proffered Boon
- * An Absolute Offer of Jesus Necessary to Faith
- * A Christ Offered for Everything

DEAR READER: - AS I AM ANXIOUS that the one grand theme-salvation through the blood-shedding of Jesus alone-should be set before you in a variety of aspects, that, if you miss it in one, you may realise it in another, I would now present it as a gift of grace. "For by grace are ye saved," (Ephesians 2:8). "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," (Romans 6:23). "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," (John 3:16). As one English reformer, Thomas Becon, said:

Here God, who is infinite and unspeakable, gives after such a manner as passeth all things. For that which He gives He gives not as the wages of desert, but of mere love. This sort of giving, which has its spring in love, makes this gift more excellent and precious. And the words of Christ are plain that God loveth us. And as God, the Giver, is exceedingly great, so is the gift that He giveth, which is His only Son. Let us understand that God is not said to be angry with the world, but to love it in that He gave His Son for it. God is merciful to us and loveth us, and of very love gave His Son unto us, that we should not perish, but have everlasting life. And as God giveth by love and mercy, so do we take and receive by faith and not otherwise. Faith only - that is, trust in the mercy and grace of God - is the very hand by which we take this gift. This gift is given to make us safe from death and sin. And it is bestowed upon the world, and the world signifies all mankind. Why shouldst thou not suffer thyself to be of this name, seeing that Christ with plain words saith, that God gave not His Son only for Mary, Peter, and Paul, but for the world, that all should receive Him that are the sons of men? Then if thou or I should receive Him as if He did not appertain to us, truly it would consequently follow that

Christ's words are not true, wherein He saith He was given and delivered for the world. Wherefore hereof appears that the contrary thereto is most assuredly true, that this gift belongs as well unto thee as to Peter and Paul, for as much as thou also art a man as they were, and a portion of the world. . . . Whatsoever I am, God is not to be taken as unfaithful to His promise. I am a portion of the world, wherefore if I take not this gift as mine, I make God untrue. But thou wilt say, 'Why does He not shew this to me alone? Then I would believe and think surely that it appertained to me.' But it is for a great consideration that God speaks here so generally; to the intent, verily, that no, man should think that he is excluded from this promise and gift. He that excludes himself must give an account why he does so. 'I will not judge them,' saith He, 'but they shall be judged of their own

mouth.' . . . We are saved, then, only by the mercy of God; and we obtain this grace only by faith, without virtue, without merits, and without works. For the whole matter, that is necessary to the getting of everlasting life and remission of sins, is altogether and fully comprehended in the love and mercy of God through Christ."

Blessed be God our God! Who gave for us His well-beloved Son, His gift of gifts, all other gifts in one.

Blessed be God our God!

He spared not His Son!

'Tis this that silences each rising fear, 'Tis this that bids the hard thought disappear; He spared not His Son!

Dr. Chalmers wrote the following words in a letter to a friend:

I must say that I never had so close and satisfactory a view of the gospel salvation as when I have been led to contemplate it in the light of a simple offer on the one side, and a simple acceptance on the other. It is just saying to one and all of us, 'There is forgiveness through the blood of my Son: take it' and whoever believes the reality of the offer takes it.

It is not in any shape the reward of our own services; . . . it is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is not given because you are worthy to receive it, but because it is a gift worthy of our kind and reconciled Father to bestow.

We are apt to stagger at the greatness of the unmerited offer, and cannot attach faith to it till we have made up some title of our own. This leads to two mischievous consequences. It keeps alive the presumption of one class of Christians, who will still be thinking that it is something in themselves and of themselves which confers upon them a right to salvation; and it confirms the melancholy of another class, who look into their own hearts and their own lives, and find that they cannot make out a shadow of a title to the divine favour. The error of both lies in their looking to themselves when they should be looking to the Saviour. 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth,' (Isaiah 45:22). The Son of man was so lifted up that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life, (John 3:14-15). It is your part simply to lay hold of the proffered boon. You are invited to do so; you are entreated to do so; nay, what is more, you are commanded to do so. It is true you are unworthy, and without holiness no man can see God; but be not afraid, only believe! You cannot get holiness of yourself, but Christ has undertaken to provide it for you. It is one of those spiritual blessings of which He has the dispensation, and which He has promised to all who believe in Him.

God has promised that with His Son He will freely give you all things, (Romans 8:32), -that He will walk in you, and dwell in you, (2 Corinthians 6:16), - that He will purify your heart by faith, (Acts 15:9), - that He will put His law in your heart, and write it in your mind, (Hebrews 8:10).

These are the effects of your believing in Christ, and not the services by which you become entitled to believe in Him. Make a clear outset in the business, and understand that your first step is simply a confiding acceptance of an offer that is 'Most free, most frank, most generous, and most unconditional.

If I were to come as an accredited agent from the upper sanctuary with a letter of invitation to you, with your name and address on it, you would not doubt your warrant to accept it. Well, here is the Bible, your invitation to come to Christ. It does not bear your name and address, but it says 'Whosoever' that takes you in; it says 'all' - that takes you in; it says 'if any' - that takes you in. What can be surer or freer than that?"

Old Traill of London said:

"We glory in any name of reproach (as the honourable reproach of Christ) that is cast upon us for asserting the absolute boundless freedom of the grace of God, which excludes all merit, and everything like it; the absoluteness of the covenant of grace, for the covenant of redemption was plainly and strictly a conditional one, and the noblest of all conditions was in it. The Son of God's taking on Him man's nature, and offering it in sacrifice, was the strict condition of all the glory and reward promised to Christ and His seed, (Isaiah 53:10-11), - wherein all things are freely promised, and that faith that is required for sealing a man's interest in the covenant is promised in it, and wrought by the grace of it, (Ephesians 2:8). That faith at first is wrought by, and acts upon, a full and absolute offer of Christ, and of all His fulness; an offer that hath no condition in it, but that native one to all offers, acceptance: and in the very act of this acceptance, the acceptor doth expressly disclaim all things in himself, but sinfulness and misery. That faith in Jesus Christ doth justify (although, by the way, it is to be noted that it is never written in the Word that faith justifieth actively, but always passively, that a man is justified by faith, and that God justifieth men by and through faith; yet admitting the phrase) only as a mere instrument, receiving that imputed righteousness of Christ for which we are justified; and that this faith, in the office of justification, is neither condition, nor qualification, nor our gospel righteousness, but in its very act a renouncing of all such pretences.

We proclaim the market of grace to be free (Isaiah 55:1-3). It is Christ's last offer - and lowest, (Revelation 22:17). If there be any price or money spoken of, it is no price, no money. And where such are the terms and conditions, if we be forced to call them so, we must say that they look liker a renouncing, than a boasting of any qualifications or conditions. Surely the terms of the gospel bargain are, Gods free giving, and our free taking and receiving.

It is quite natural for us, born as we are, under the law, and brought up under the restraining influences of religion and civilisation, to suppose that we can be saved only by conforming to certain rules and implementing certain conditions. It is difficult to lay aside the performing of all duties as a means of being accepted graciously by God, and to submit to be sought and saved simply as lost sinners, by a loving Redeemer, who delivers us from guilt, corruption, and perdition, "without money and without price," (Isaiah 55:1). An eminent writer of last century says truly: The gospel is much clouded by legal terms, conditions, and qualifications. If my doctrine were, Upon condition that you did so and so-that you believe, and repent, and mourn, and pray, and obey, and the like then you shall have the favour of God -I dare not for my life say that is the gospel. But the gospel I desire to preach to you is, Will you have a Christ to work faith, repentance, love, and all good in you, and to stand between you and the sword of Divine wrath? Here there is no room for you to object that you are not qualified, because you are such a hardened, unhumiliated, blind and stupid wretch. For the question is not, Will you remove these evils and then come to Christ? but, Will you have a Christ to remove them for you? It is because you are plagued with these diseases

that I call you to come to the Physician that He may heal them. Are you guilty? I offer Him unto you for righteousness. Are you polluted ? I offer Him unto you for sanctification. Are you miserable and forlorn? I offer Him as made of God unto you complete redemption. Are you hard-hearted? I offer Him in that promise, 'I will take away the heart of stone,' (Ezekiel 36:26). Are you content that He break your hard heart ? Come, then, and put your hard heart into His hand."

I'VE FOUND THE PEARL OF GREATEST PRICE! My heart doth sing for joy; And sing I must, A CHRIST I HAVE!

Oh what a Christ have !! MY CHRIST He is the Lord of lords, He is the King of kings; He is the Sun of Righteousness, With healing in His wings. MY CHRIST He is the Tree of Life Which in God's garden grows; Whose fruits do feed, whose leaves do heal; My Christ is Sharon's Rose.

CHRIST IS MY MEAT, CHRIST IS MY DRINK, MY MEDICINE AND MY HEALTH; MY PEACE, MY STRENGTH, MY JOY, MY CROWN, MY GLORY, AND MY WEALTH.

01.06. Blood of Jesus our Only Ground of Peace with God

Blood of Jesus our Only Ground of Peace with God Topics In This Chapter:

* Accepted In The Beloved

* Safety Through The Blood Of Sprinkling

* God's Estimate Of The Blood Of Jesus

* The Spirit's Work Not The Ground Of Peace

* Conscience Rests Where God Finds Rest

* Victory Through The Blood Of Jesus WHEN YOU, WHO ARE ANXIOUS about your soul, are hearing much prayer offered by Christians for the Holy Spirit, you may conclude that the first thing you also have to do is to pray for the Holy Spirit; but Jesus himself sets you right in this matter when He says, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent," (John 6:29). If you desire to do this at the throne of grace, by all means repair thither, but do not go to it to do anything else at present. Believers in Jesus pray "in the Holy Ghost " (Jude 1:20) that He may revive the work of God in themselves and in their fellow-believers,-lead awakened souls to Jesus,-and convince sinners of their wickedness and unbelief ; but as your only foundation for peace, pardon, purity, and glory, is to be found in the blood-shedding of Jesus, your more immediate occupation is to " behold the Lamb of God," (John 1:29). No doubt, the quickening presence of the Holy Spirit is most essential to your seeing Jesus to the saving of your soul, and you should by all means expect His gracious presence to be vouchsafed as you contemplate the crucified Redeemer; but it is unscriptural to seek the sanctification of your heart through the Spirit before the justification of your person through Christ; and it is equally unscriptural to mix the two, and depend partly on the one and partly on the other; for Jesus, and Jesus only, is the object on which your anxious eyes must rest for peace with God and a change of heart. "It is Christ that died," (Romans 8:34); and the Spirit's office is to direct you to Him who said on Calvary, "It is finished," (John 19:20). It is nowhere written in Scripture, "The work Of GOD'S Holy Spirit cleanseth us from sin; but it is written that "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin," (1 John 1:7). What you are called upon, then, more especially to do, is to receive Jesus as your Redeemer, that you may "HAVE REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD, THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE," (Ephesians 1:7): for it is written, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name," (John 1:12). We are not required to be prepared as sons, and then come and be accepted of God, be justified, and have our sins pardoned through Jesus; but we are instructed to come to Jesus in order to our being justified freely by His grace, and made sons through living union with Him who is the eternal Son of God. We are justified freely as sinners, and being thus accepted in the Beloved, we become sons of God, and have the nature, experience, and walk of His children. Awakened sinner! Begin at the beginning of the alphabet of salvation, by looking upon Him who was pierced on Calvary's cross for our sins-look to the Lamb of God, and

keep continually looking unto Jesus, and not at your repentings, resolutions, reformations, praying, reading, hearing, or anything of yours as forming any reason why you should be accepted, pardoned, and saved-and you will soon find peace, and take your place among them that "worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," (Php 3:3).

I do not know a more striking illustration of salvation by the blood of Jesus alone, than that which is furnished by the sprinkling of the blood of the passover lamb on the homes of the Israelites, on the eve of their redemption from the bondage of Egypt. "The blood on the lintel secured Israel's peace." There was nothing more required in order to enjoy settled peace, in reference to the destroying angel, than the application of "the blood of sprinkling." God did not add anything to the blood, because nothing more was necessary to obtain salvation from the sword of judgment. He did not say, "When I see the blood and the unleavened bread or bitter herbs, I will pass over." By no means. These things had their proper place, and their proper value; but they never could be regarded as the ground of peace in the presence of God.

It is most needful to be simple and clear as to what it is which constitutes the- groundwork of peace. So many things are mixed up with the work of Christ, that souls are plunged in darkness and uncertainty as to their acceptance. They know that there is no other way of being saved but by the blood of Christ; but the devils know this, and it avails them nought. What is needed is to know that -we are saved -absolutely, perfectly, eternally saved. There is no such thing as being partly saved and partly lost; partly justified and partly guilty; partly alive and partly dead; partly born of God and partly not. There are but the two states, and we must be in either the one or the other. The Israelite was not partly sheltered by the blood, and partly exposed to the sword of the destroyer. He knew he was safe. He did not hope so. He was not praying to be so. He was perfectly safe. And why? Because God hath said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you," (Exodus 12:13). He simply rested upon God's testimony about the shed blood. He set to his seal that God was true. He believed that God meant what He said, and that gave him peace. He was able to take his place at the paschal-feast, in confidence, quietness, and assurance, knowing that the destroyer could not touch him, when a spotless victim had died in his stead.

If an Israelite had been asked as to his enjoyment of peace, what would he have said? Would he have said, "I know there is no other way of escape but by the blood of the lamb; and I know that that is a divinely perfect way; and, moreover, I know that that blood has been shed and sprinkled on my door-post; but somehow, I do not feel quite comfortable. I am not quite sure if I am, safe. I fear I do not value the blood as I ought, nor love the God of my fathers as I ought?" Would such have been his answer? Assuredly not. And yet hundreds of professing Christians speak thus, when asked if they have peace. They put their thoughts about the blood in place of the blood itself, and thus, in result, make salvation as much dependent upon themselves as if they were to be saved by works.

Now, the Israelite was saved by the blood alone, and not by his thoughts about it. His thoughts might be deep or they might be shallow; but, deep or shallow, they had nothing to do with his safety. He was not saved by his thoughts or feelings, but by the blood. God did not say, "When you see the blood, I will pass over you." No : but 'when I see.' What gave an Israelite peace was the fact that Jehovah's eye rested on the blood. This tranquillised his heart. The blood was outside, and the Israelite inside, so that he could not possibly see it; but God saw it, and that was

quite enough. The application of this to the question of a sinner's peace is very plain. Christ, having shed His blood as a perfect atonement for sin, has taken it into the presence of God and sprinkled it there; and God's testimony assures the believer that everything is settled on his behalf. All the claims of justice have been fully answered, sin has been perfectly put away, so that the full tide of redeeming love may roll down from the heart of God, along the channel which the sacrifice of Christ has opened for it. To this truth the Holy Ghost bears witness. He ever sets forth the fact of God's estimate of the blood of Christ. He points the sinner's eye to the accomplished work of the cross. He declares that all is done; that sin has been put far away, and righteousness brought nigh-so nigh, that it is 'to all them that believe,' (Romans 3:22). Believe what? Believe what God says ; because He says it, not because they feel it.

Now, we are constantly prone to look at something in ourselves as necessary to form the ground of peace. We are apt to regard the work of the Spirit in us rather than the work of Christ for us, as the foundation of our peace. This is a mistake. We know that the operations of the Spirit of God have their proper place in Christianity; but His work is never set forth as that on which our peace depends. The Holy Ghost did not make peace ; but Christ did : the Holy Ghost is not said to be our peace ; but Christ is, God did not send 'preaching peace' by the Holy Ghost, but 'by Jesus Christ,' (comp. Acts 10:36; Ephesians 2:14, Ephesians 2:17; Colossians 1:20). The Holy Ghost reveals Christ; He makes us to know, enjoy, and feed upon Christ. He bears witness to Christ ; takes of the things of Christ, and shews them unto us. He is the power of communion, the seal, the witness, the earnest, the unction. In short, His operations are essential Without Him, we can neither see, hear, know, feel, experience, enjoy, nor exhibit aught of Christ. This is plain, and is understood and admitted by every true and rightly-instructed Christian.

Yet, notwithstanding all this, the work of the Spirit is not the ground of peace, though He enables us to enjoy the peace. He is not our title, though He reveals our title, and enables us to enjoy it. The Holy Ghost is still carrying on His work in the soul of the believer. He 'maketh intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered,' (Romans 8:26). He labours to bring us into more entire conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ. His aim is "to present every man perfect in Christ", (Colossians 1:28). He is the author of every right desire, every holy aspiration, every pure and heavenly affection, every divine experience; but His work in and with us will not be complete until we have left this present scene, and taken our place with Christ in the glory. Just as, in the case of Abraham's servant, his work was not complete until he presented Rebekah to Isaac. Not so the work of Christ for us: that is absolutely and eternally complete. He could say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," (John 17:4); and, again, "IT IS FINISHED," (John 19:30). The blessed Spirit cannot yet say He has finished the work. He has been patiently and faithfully working for the last eighteen hundred years as the true -the Divine Vicar of Christ on earth. He still works amidst the various hostile influences which surround the sphere of His operations. He still works in the hearts of the people of God, in order to bring them up, practically and experimentally, to the divinely, appointed standard ; but He never teaches a soul to lean on His work for peace in the presence of divine holiness. His office is to speak of Jesus. He does not speak of Himself. 'He,' says Christ, "shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you," (John 16:4). He can only present Christ's work as the solid basis on which the soul must rest for ever. Yea, it is on the ground of Christ's perfect atonement that He takes up His abode and carries on His operations in the believer. 'In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,'

(Ephesians 1:13). No power or energy of the Holy Ghost could cancel sin; the blood has done that. 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,' (1 John 1:7).

It is of the utmost importance to distinguish between the Spirit's work in us and Christ's work for us. Where they are confounded, one rarely finds settled peace as to the question of sin. The type of the passover illustrates the distinction very simply. The Israelite's peace was not founded upon the unleavened bread or the bitter herbs, but upon the blood. Nor was it, by any means, a question of what he thought about the blood, but what God thought about it. This gives immense relief and comfort to the heart. God has found a ransom, and He reveals that ransom to us sinners in order that we might rest therein, on the authority of His word, and by the grace of His Spirit. And albeit our thoughts and feelings must ever fall far short of the infinite preciousness of that ransom, yet, inasmuch as God tells us that He is perfectly satisfied about our sins, we may be satisfied also. Our conscience may well find settled rest where God's holiness finds rest.

Beloved reader, if you have not as yet found peace in Jesus, we pray you to ponder this deeply. See the simplicity of the ground on which your peace is to rest. God is well pleased in the finished work of Christ - 'well pleased for His righteousness sake,' (Isaiah 42:21). That righteousness is not founded upon your feelings or experience, but upon the shed blood of the Lamb of God; and hence your peace is not dependent upon your feelings or experience, but upon the same precious blood which is of changeless efficacy and changeless value in the judgment of God.

What then, remains for the believer? To what is he called ? To keep the feast of unleavened bread, by putting away everything contrary to the hallowed purity of his elevated position. It is his privilege to feed upon that precious Christ whose blood has cancelled all his guilt. Being assured that the sword of the destroyer cannot touch him, because it has fallen upon Christ instead, it is for him to feast in holy repose within the blood-stricken door, under the perfect shelter which God's own love has provided in the blood of the cross. May God the Holy Ghost lead every doubting, wavering heart to find rest in the divine testimony contained in those words, ' When I see the blood, I will pass over you,' (Exodus 12:13)." (Things New and old, vol. I, London: Morriah).

Until I saw the blood, 'twas hell, my soul was fearing; And dark and dreary in my eyes the future was appearing, While conscience told its tale of sin, And caused a weight of woe within. But when I saw the blood, and look'd at Him who shed it, My right to peace was seen at once, and I with transport read it; I found myself to God brought nigh, And "Victory" became my cry. My joy was in the blood, the news of which bid told me, That spotless as the Lamb of God, my Father could behold me, And all my boast was in His name Through whom this great salvation came. And when, with golden harps, the throne of God surrounding, The white-robed saints around the throne their songs of joy are soundin ; With them I'll praise that precious blood Which has redeem'd our souls to, God.

01.07. Regeneration through the Blood of Jesus

Regeneration through the Blood of Jesus Topics In This Chapter:

- * The Necessity Of Being Born Again
- * Reasons Why We Must Be Born Again
- * Ye Must Be Born Again
- * Born Again By The Word Of God

DEAR READER - JESUS SPOKE OF regeneration as essential to salvation; and it is possible you may feel as if that experience stood between you and the "precious blood of Christ," (1 Peter 1:19). It seems as if it did, but it does not; for we are saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which is "shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour," (Titus 3:6). It can do you only good to consider the necessity of being born again, for it will shew you at once your utter helplessness and the all-sufficiency of the blood of JESUS alone to give you peace with God and a new heart. We do not shrink from the fullest statement of the truth of Scripture on this point; for it will be found that it does not clash in the very least with the truth, which I am specially desirous to impart, that we are not accepted as righteous in God's sight otherwise than in Christ; for, says the Word, "He made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The necessity of being born again will shew us only the more clearly that we must be saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Turn to and read the third chapter of the Gospel by John, and then ponder the following thoughts on this vitally important subject, and see how you are stripped of every plea for mercy arising from yourself, and laid down as a lost sinner at the cross of Christ, needing to be saved by "grace" alone: -

Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, asserts the absolute necessity of regeneration, when He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," (John 3:3). And farther on, He says, as solemnly and decidedly, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," (John 3:5). And He gives a fact as the reason of this necessity: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," (John 3:6). "Flesh," or corrupt human nature - man as he is - is unfit to enter God's kingdom, and will ever continue so. No self-regeneration is to be expected. The total depravity of human nature renders a radical spiritual change of absolute necessity. The whole race, and every individual "man," is utterly depraved in heart, his will averse from good, his conscience is defiled, his understanding is darkened, his affections are alienated from God and set upon unworthy objects, his desires are corrupt, his appetites ungoverned; and, unless the Holy Spirit impart a new nature, and work an entire change on the whole faculties of his mind by "the washing of water through the word," cleansing away his filthiness of spirit as water cleanses away outward defilement, he must remain an unfit subject for God's holy kingdom. And observe that Jesus spoke of two classes only - those who are "fleshly," and those who are "spiritual." We are naturally connected - as are all mankind - with those who are "born of the flesh," who, on that very account, cannot even so much as "see

the kingdom of God;" and we can get out of our natural state only by a spiritual birth; for only "that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit," (John 3:6). All of us being born of parents who were themselves fallen and corrupt, are necessarily infected by the hereditary taint of depravity of nature; and, besides, "the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not -subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God," (Romans 8:7-8), and cannot enter into His kingdom. Attempts at morality are of no account with God. A moral Nicodemus was told he required something deeper and more comprehensive than conformity to a certain standard which passes with the world for morality. God's standard of holiness is not morality but spirituality. But some may say that, by publishing such extreme views, we may make many well-meaning persons feel disgusted at religion, and go off from it altogether. But it is not our fault if they do so on account of the insufferableness of Divine truth. Are you convinced that Scripture is right when it says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Do you believe that, as a man in the flesh, you are more like Satan than God? - incapable of knowing, loving, or serving God, and although in reputation for the highest morality, utterly unfit for entering into His holy kingdom?

It is, no doubt, hard to believe that one's own self is so bad as I have indicated, and none but the Holy Spirit can truly convince us of it; but does not Jesus represent our condition as utterly depraved - as "flesh?" Does He not solemnly aver, that without a new birth from above, not one-no, not even a moral, learned, inquiring, Nicodemus - can see or enter the kingdom of God? He does not say that he may not, but that he cannot enter - leaving it to be inferred that it is morally impossible. And this arises from the fact of its being a kingdom, as well as from the fact of our depravity. An anarchist has a decided dislike to constitutional and settled government; so a man, who hates the law by which God's kingdom is governed, cannot be a loyal subject of His holy administration. God would require to change His nature before He admitted any of us into His kingdom with our nature unchanged. But as God cannot change, we must be changed, if we would see or enter His kingdom. Before we can be happy and loyal subjects of it, we must be, "born again;" and, being new creatures, have its laws written in our minds and hearts.

Besides, as a professor in one of our colleges has well remarked, " It is a principle of our nature that, in order to happiness, there must be some correspondence betwixt the tastes, the dispositions, the habits of a man, and the scene in which he is placed, the society with which he mingles, and the services in which he is employed. A coward on the field of battle, a profligate in the house of prayer, a giddy worldling standing by a death-bed, a drunkard in the company of holy men, feel instinctively that they are misplaced - they have no enjoyment there." And what enjoyment could unregenerate men have in God's kingdom, on earth, or in heaven? Even the outward services of the sanctuary below are distasteful to them, in proportion to their spirituality. As long as preachers keep by the pictorial and illustrative - and speak of the seasons of the year, the beautiful earth, and the ancient sea, mountains and plains, rivers and lakes, fields, flowers and fruits, sun, moon, and stars - they comprehend the discourse and applaud it; but when the deeply spiritual and eternally important form the theme, they feel listless, and characterise it as dull, prosy, and uninteresting. But if we cannot enjoy a highly spiritual discourse, it must be because we are "carnal," and want the spiritual "sense" which always accompanies the new birth; for "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," (1 Corinthians 2:14). And is it not an

alarming truth, that this being "BORN AGAIN" is not a making of ourselves better, but a being made anew spiritually by God himself! This appears evident from what Jesus said during His conversation with Nicodemus. His words are these, " Except a man be born of water and of THE SPIRIT, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," (John 3:5). This great change is effected by the Holy Spirit, through means of the living "water" of the Word of God-the testimony of Jesus-and is of a spiritual nature, "for that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It consists not in outward reformation, but inward transformation. We must be regenerated in soul in order to be truly reformed in life. The change is of such a nature that it is sure to be manifested outwardly if it exist inwardly. If you wish to have a holy life, you must be born again. Praying, weeping, striving against sin, and obeying God's laws, is just so much labour lost, unless you have in the first place this born-again experience.

Ah! but you say, as you read this hard saying, This lays me entirely prostrate before God, a sick and dying sinner; and I may give myself up to despair at once, for such an experience is utterly beyond my reach.

No, not at all! You may well despair of self, for self is incurably bad, but you are by this shut up to trust in "Jesus only," (Mark 9:8). For, remember, Jesus continued to before this Jewish ruler atonement through Himself, lifted up as a mediator, and God's love to a perishing world, embodied in the gift and work of His Son. You want to be born again? Well, Jesus would have you look to the Son of man lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and you will thus be pardoned and made to live. You say you are prostrated and helpless - with the poison of the serpent coursing through you - sick and dying, and you want to live - to experience such a new life as shall prove not only a present counteractive to the virus of this terrible death-poison, but also an enduring spiritual reality? Well, Jesus says, in this conversation with the inquiring ruler, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," (John 3:16).

God sent His Son not to condemn the perishing men of the world to lie in their corrupt and diseased condition, and perish for ever, but that He Himself might die that they might be pardoned and saved! And those who are recovered from the disease of corruption, tell us that they were "born again" not by lying in their corruption and crying for a new nature, and expecting it to come in some arbitrary and different way from that of faith; but their uniform testimony is, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth," (James 1:18); we are new creatures, "being born again by the word of God,"¹ (1 Peter 1:23); and "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," (1 John 5:1). The realisation of regeneration being by faith in Jesus, you must fill your eyes with the atoning cross if you would have your guilt removed, and you must direct your eyes to the risen Living One at the right hand of God, and through Him get out of the old creation with its condemnation and death, into the new creation with its justification and life, if you would know what it is to be "born again," and have your heart filled with divine life. (See Romans 6:1-23 and Ephesians 2:1-22). This is the truth which Jesus taught in His conversation, with Nicodemus; and the whole drift of the Gospel in which it occurs is a copy of the mind of Christ on this point; for the writer says, towards its close, " These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name," (John 20:31).

If you still feel that you know nothing of being "born again," bring your mind into broad and immediate contact with THE WHOLE of this conversation. Do not close the book and moan over the misery of your state, as it is now discovered to you by the awakening truths contained from John 20:3-9; but go on until you take in the discovery of the plain, gracious, free, and righteous way of getting out of your death and misery, as you have it laid down by Jesus, when He speaks (from the fourteenth to the seventeenth verse) of His own all-sufficient sacrifice, and His Father's unexampled love and gracious purpose towards perishing sinners, and His willingness to save and give eternal life to every one who believes in Him. "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:12).

Footnotes:

1"Every one who really believes is said to be born of God; and as every true believer is a converted man, it follows that the production of saving faith is equivalent to the work of regeneration...Conversion properly consists in a sinner being brought actually, intelligently and cordially, to close and comply with God's revealed will on the subject of His salvation." - Professor Buchanan, D.D., LL.D.

01.08. Faith in the Blood of Jesus Essential to Salvation

Faith in the Blood of Jesus Essential to Salvation Topics In This Chapter:

- * Faith The Saving Link
- * The Evil Of Mistaking The Meaning Of Faith
- * Faith Is Being Satisfied With Christ

IT IS OUR BELIEF of God's testimony concerning His own grace and Christ's work that brings us into possession of the blessings concerning which that testimony speaks. Our reception of God's testimony is confidence in God himself, and in Christ Jesus His Son; for where the testimony comes from a person or regards a person, belief of the testimony and confidence in the person are things inseparable. Hence it is that Scripture sometimes speaks of confidence or trust as saving us, (see the Psalms everywhere, such as Psalms 8:5, Psalms 52:8 ; also 1 Timothy 4:10, Ephesians 1:12), as if it would say to the sinner, "Such is the gracious character of God, that you have only to put your case into His hands, however bad it be - only to trust him for eternal life - and he will assuredly not put you to shame." Hence, also, it is that we are said to be saved by the knowledge of God or of Christ; that is, by simply knowing God as He has made Himself known to us, (Isaiah 5:3, Isaiah 53:11; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 2:20); for "this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent," (John 17:2). And as if to make simplicity more simple, the apostle, in speaking of the facts of Christ's death and burial and resurrection says, "By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you," (1 Corinthians 15:1-2).

God would have us understand that the way in which we become connected with Christ so as to get eternal life, is by, "knowing Him," or "hearing" Him - "trusting" Him. The testimony is inseparably linked to the person testified of ; and our connexion with the testimony, by belief of it, thus links us to the person. Thus it is that faith forms the bond between us and the Son of God, not because of anything in itself, but solely because it is only through the medium of truth known and believed that the soul can take any hold of God or of Christ. Faith is nothing, save as it lays hold of Christ, and it does so by laying hold of the truth concerning him. "By grace are ye saved THROUGH FAITH; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God," (Ephesians 2:8).

Faith then, is the link, the one link between the sinner and Gods gift of pardon and life. It is not faith, and something else along with it; it is faith alone; faith that takes God at His word, and gives Him credit for speaking the honest truth when making known His message of grace - His "record" of eternal life concerning "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world," (John 1:29).

If you object that you cannot believe, then this indicates that you are proceeding quite in a wrong direction. You are still laboring under the idea that this believing is a work to be done by you, and not the acknowledgment of a work done by another. You would fain do something in order to get peace, and you think that if you could only do this great thing, 'believing' - if you could but perform

this great act called faith - God would at once reward you by giving you peace. Thus faith is reckoned by you to be the price in the sinner's hand by which he buys peace, and not the mere holding out of the hand to get a peace which has already been bought by another. So long as you are attaching any meritorious importance to faith, however unconsciously, you are moving in a wrong direction - a direction from which no peace can come. Surely faith is not a work. On the contrary, it is a ceasing from work. It is not a climbing of the mountain, but a ceasing to attempt it, and allowing Christ to carry you up in His own arms. You seem to think that it is your own act of faith that is to save you, and not the object of your faith, without which your own act, however well performed, is nothing. Accordingly, you bethink yourself, and say, 'What a mighty work is this believing - what an effort does it require on my part - how am I to perform it?' Herein you sadly err, and your mistake lies chiefly here, in supposing that your peace is to come from the proper performance on your part of an act of faith, whereas it is to come entirely from the proper perception of Him to whom the Father is pointing your eye, and in regard to whom He is saying, "Behold my servant whom I have chosen, look at Him, forget everything else - everything about yourself, your own faith, your own repentance, your own feelings -and look at HIM!" It is in Him, and not in your poor act of faith, that salvation lies, and out of Him, not out of your own act of faith, is peace to come.

Thus mistaking the meaning of faith, and the way in which faith saves you, you get into confusion, and mistake everything else connected with your peace. You mistake the real nature of that very inability to believe of which you complain so sadly. For that inability does not lie, as you fancy it does, in the impossibility of your performing aright this great act of faith, but of ceasing from all such self-righteous attempts to perform any act, or do any work whatsoever, in order to your being saved. So that the real truth is, that you have not yet seen such a sufficiency in the one great work of the Son of God upon the cross, as to lead you utterly to discontinue your mistaken aimless efforts to work out something of your own. As soon as the Holy Spirit shews you have this entire sufficiency of the great propitiation, you cease at once from these attempts to act or work something of your own, and take, instead of this, what Christ has done. One great part of the Spirit's work is, not to enable the man to do something which will help to save him, but so to detach him from his own performances, that he shall be content with the salvation which Christ finished when He died and rose again. But perhaps you may object further, that you are not satisfied with your faith. No, truly, nor are you ever likely to be. If you wait for this before you take peace, you will wait till life is done. The Bible does not say, 'Being satisfied about our faith, we have peace with God;' it simply says, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God,' (Romans 5:1). Not satisfaction with your own faith, but satisfaction with Jesus and His work - this is what God presses on you. You say, 'I am satisfied with Christ.' Are you? What more, then, do you wish? Is not satisfaction with Christ enough for you, or for any sinner? Nay, and is not this the truest kind of faith? To be satisfied with Christ, that is faith in Christ. To be satisfied with His blood, that is faith in His blood. What more could you have? Can your faith give you something which Christ cannot? or will Christ give you nothing till you can produce faith of a certain kind and quality, whose excellences will entitle you to blessing? Do not bewilder yourself. Do not suppose that your faith is a price, or a bribe, or a merit. Is not the very essence of real faith just your being satisfied with Christ? Are you really satisfied with Him, and with what He has done? Then do not puzzle yourself about your faith, but go upon your way rejoicing, having thus been brought to be satisfied with Him, whom to know is peace, and life, and salvation.

You are not satisfied with your faith, you say. I am glad that you are not. Had you been so, you would have been far out of the way indeed. Does Scripture anywhere speak of your getting peace by your becoming satisfied with your faith? Nay, does it not take for granted that you will, to the very last, be dissatisfied with yourself, with your faith, with all about you and within you, and satisfied with Jesus only? Are you then satisfied with Him? Then go in peace. For if satisfaction with Him will not give you peace, nothing else that either heaven or earth contain will ever give you peace. Though your faith should become so perfect that you were entirely satisfied with it, that would not pacify your conscience or relieve your fears. Faith, however perfect, has of itself nothing to give you, either of pardon or of life. Its finger points you to Jesus. Its voice bids you look straight to Him. Its object is to turn away from itself and from yourself altogether, that you may behold Him, and in beholding Him be satisfied with Him; and, in being satisfied with Him have 'joy and peace.' ("Words for the Inquiring," by Horatius Bonar, D.D.)

Faith is not what we FEEL or see, It is a simple TRUST In what the GOD of Love has said Of JESUS, as the 'Just.'

What JESUS is, and that alone, Is faith's delightful plea; It never deals with SINFUL self Nor RIGHTEOUS self, IN ME.

It tells me I am counted 'DEAD' By GOD, in His own Word; It tells me I am 'BORN AGAIN' In CHRIST, my RISEN LORD.

If He is free, then I am free, From all unrighteousness If He is just, then I am just, HE is MY righteousness.

01.09. Blood of Jesus the Believer's Life and Peace

Blood of Jesus the Believer's Life and Peace Topics In This Chapter:

- * Looking Unto Jesus
- * Personal Contact With The Living Jesus
- * Rejoicing In Jesus
- * Justification Perfect And Complete

I NOW LEAVE OFF addressing myself specially to unconverted awakened, that I may lay a few thoughts before brethren in Christ who are awakening to a deeper sense of their obligations and responsibilities

We are living in a most important era of our world's history! How melancholy the condition, and how ominous of evil the attitude of earth's nations! Warlike powers confront each other, and the blood of their embattled hosts is shed in torrents. How persevering and successful is man in carrying forward his gigantic schemes and favourite movements! Strange is it also, that an all but universal cry for regeneration among earth's nations should be made simultaneously with a cry for the Holy Ghost to achieve for the professing Church a mighty spiritual revival.

We cannot help being stimulated in our exertions for the cause of Christ, by contiguity to unceasing earthly activity manifested on every side; but were this our only incentive to action, our zeal would be spurious; for all effort and activity in promoting the gospel which are the offspring of mere imitation, and originate only in proximity to the activity displayed by the world, instead of being based on personal faith in Christ and living communion with God, form nothing higher and nothing better than "a fair show in the flesh." But we have reason to believe that a mighty breath of the Divine Spirit is now passing over the earth. The Church of the living God, scattered throughout the different denominations, has been feeling its influence; and the result of His gracious presence and quickening power is appearing in greatly increased religious activity and zeal for the conversion of souls. This is matter for thankfulness. We need to have a renewal of our youth that we may be healthy, fresh, and vigorous to engage energetically in the great work that is to be done for God in these eventful days that are now passing over us. And let us ever bear in mind that the grand prerequisite to thorough usefulness is, that we ourselves should be "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and, length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:16-19). If we would be filled with the grace of God and refreshed in our souls it is essential, at such a time as the present, that we should constantly recall and deeply ponder the great foundation-truths on which we rested at the time of our conversion. "Looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2) is the most refreshing exercise in which we can engage; and the shortest road to genuine spiritual revival is by the cross of Calvary. When the

Rev. W. H. Hewitson was on his deathbed, and had several texts illustrative of the faithfulness of God quoted to him by a friend, he remarked after his friend had withdrawn : - "Texts like these do not give me so much comfort, as 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,' (John 3:15); or, 'He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'"(Romans 8:32). Plain doctrinal statements, exhibiting the heart of God, are more sustaining to me than mere promises. I like to get into contact with the living person." This experience is very common in such circumstances. When the most intelligent Christian draws near to death, he feels that he can rest with confidence on nothing except the great elementary truths of God's glorious gospel, and the living person of His risen Son. And when we are in a state of spiritual decay; when our "soul is full of troubles, and our life draweth nigh unto the grave," (Psalms 88:3); when our - "spirit is overwhelmed, and our heart within us is desolate," (Psalms 143:4) there is nothing so reviving and invigorating as the leading fundamental truths of the gospel of Christ. The faithful saying, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," (1 Timothy 1:15) is at once the means of reviving the Christian, and of giving life to the self-despairing sinner; for the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," (Romans 1:16). "None but Jesus" can avail us either for peace of conscience with reference to past transgressions, peace of heart with reference to present circumstances, or for peace of mind with reference to future prospects. This is not theory, but experience, as every child of God knows. Another writes:

I feel that nothing can do me good but personal contact with the living person of the Lord Jesus. Looking at systems and creeds - doctrines and duties - may be all very well in its own place, but if I am to be a healthy, fruit-bearing Christian, I must look steadily and confidingly to the great High Priest who assumed our nature to bear our sins and win our confidence. When, by faith, we are enabled to fix a steady gaze on Jesus, how little do we care for the smile or frown of the world! 'Looking unto Jesus' enables the 'worm Jacob' to 'thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff,' (Isaiah 41:15). But I often feel that it is a very difficult matter to look away from myself, though I am sure I never get anything there to make me feel happy. No, all is in my Redeemer, and it is only when I am looking to Him as 'all my salvation' that I feel satisfied, and think I could face death with composure. The late Lady Colquhoun was one who knew the preciousness and power of resting on Christ Jesus alone for peace, comfort, and salvation, and from personal experience she was "able to teach others also." Writing to a young friend, she gave this excellent counsel:

"As well in our winters as our summers the foundation standeth sure - 'Christ is all.' With Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Precious truth! Let us rest upon it, and cease from the vain endeavour to find anything in us that can give the shadow of hope. Abiding hope must be fixed on the object that changeth not. We change daily, hourly. He remains glorious in holiness eternally. And this perfection is in the court of heaven our representative. Can we want more? Shall we say, I will add a few of my virtues and graces to the account? When we are guilty of this folly, we weary ourselves seeking for them, for they cannot be found, and our harp hangs upon the willows. But we resume the songs of Zion when we look entirely from ourselves to 'the Lord our righteousness.' How is it with you, dear A.? Can you rejoice in the Lord always? If not, experience will teach you that living on frames and feelings will not do - that comfort ebbs and flows with them

- and that you equally delude yourself when you take comfort from the feeling of nearness to God, or when you lose it because you lack that joy in devotional exercises, which is, nevertheless, extremely desirable, and much to be prized. This, however, is distinct from joy in Christ crucified, and in Christ our righteousness; and it is very possible to feel little heart for prayer, and to mourn an absent God, and yet to stand firm on the sure foundation, rejoicing in Christ, and never doubting that we are complete in Him. The reason why many real Christians are harassed with doubts, fears, and darkness, is that they leave off leaning entirely upon their beloved Saviour, and rest part of the weight of their souls' eternal well-being, on their own experience. The fruits of righteousness wrought in us by the grace of the Holy Spirit are precious as evidences, but they cannot be trusted as grounds of salvation, unless with much spiritual detriment to our souls. Legh Richmond, writing to his mother, says: Your occasional doubts and fears arise from too much considering faith and repentance as the grounds, rather than the evidences, of salvation. Our salvation is not because we do well, but because 'He in whom we trust hath done all things well.' The believing sinner is never more happy and secure than when, at the same moment, he beholds and feels his own vileness, and also his Saviour's excellence. You look at yourself too much, and at the infinite price paid for you too little. For conviction you must look at yourself, but for comfort at your Saviour. Thus the wounded Israelites were to look only at the brazen serpent for recovery. The graces of the Spirit are good things for others to judge us by, but it is Christ himself received, believed in, rested upon, loved, and followed, that will speak peace to ourselves. By looking unto Him we shall grow holy; and the more holy we grow, the more we shall mourn over sin, and be sensible how very far short we come of what we yet desire to be. While our sanctification is a gradual and still imperfect work, our justification is perfect and complete: the former is wrought in us, the latter for us. Rely simply as a worthless sinner on the Saviour, and the latter is all your own, with its accompanying blessings of pardon, acceptance, adoption, and the nonimputation of sin to your charge. Hence will flow thankful obedience, devotedness of heart, etc. This salvation is by faith alone, and thus saving faith works by love. Embrace these principles freely, fully, and impartially, and you will enjoy a truly scriptural peace, assurance and comfort. For if Christ be born within, Soon that likeness shall appear Which the heart had lost through sin God's own image fair and clear, And the soul serene and bright Mirrors back His heavenly light.

01.10. Faith in the Blood of Jesus the Spring of Holiness

Faith in the Blood of Jesus the Spring of Holiness Topics In This Chapter:

- * Living By The Faith Of The Son Of God
- * Assurance Essential To Holiness
- * The Blood Of Jesus Our Only Plea In Prayer
- * Pleading The Blood Of Jesus Insures Revival

IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT the apostle Paul, who most strenuously upholds justification by faith in Jesus, always connects it with holy living, and frequently shews that it is the firm belief of the truth of the doctrine that leads to new obedience in the life. In his Epistle to Titus, after speaking of "Jesus Christ our Saviour," and "being justified by His grace," and "made heirs according to the hope of eternal life," he directs that the doctrine of salvation by free grace alone should be affirmed constantly in order that believers might maintain good works, (Titus 3:4-8). And there can never be "good" works but on the principle of being "justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law" (Galatians 2:16). We never do good works until we do them because we are saved, not in order to be so. A lively sense of many sins forgiven will make us love much and shew it practically, (Luke 7:47). And we should have such a vital connexion with Christ, and such intimate fellowship with Him, as will exclude all surmisings as to our acceptance. If we are to render Paul-like service, we must exercise Paul-like faith, and enjoy Paul-like experience. And this is a record of how he believed and lived: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," (Galatians 2:20).

We must be well assured of the love of God in Christ Jesus, to our own souls in particular, before we will be able to say, "This one thing, I do: I strive to be holy as God is holy." One of the best of the old writers has said:

Saving faith," has always a sanctifying and comforting influence. The true believer does not divide righteousness from sanctification, nor pardon from purity. Yea, he comes to Christ for the remission of sins for the right end; and that is, that being freed from the guilt of sin, we may be freed from the dominion of it. Knowing that there is forgiveness with Him that He might be feared, he does not believe in remission of sin that he may indulge himself in the commission of sin. No, no; the blood of Christ, that purges the conscience from the guilt of sin, does also purge the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. They that come to Christ in a scriptural way come to Him for righteousness, that they may have him also for sanctification; otherwise, the man does not really desire the favour and enjoyment of God, or to be in friendship with Him who is a holy God. The true believer employs Christ for making him holy as well as happy, and hence draws virtue from Him for killing sin, and quickening him in the way of duty. The faith that can never keep you from sin will never keep you out of hell; and the faith that cannot carry you to your

duty will not carry you to heaven. Justifying faith is a sanctifying grace. It is true, as it sanctifies it does not justify; but that faith that justifies does also sanctify. As the sun that enlighteneth hath heat with it; but it is not the heat of the sun that enlightens, but the light thereof: so that faith that justifies hath love and sanctity with it; but it is not the love and sanctity that justify, but faith as closing with Christ.

"If a man hath no faith in the Lord's goodness, no hope of His favour in Christ, where is his purity and holiness? Nay, it is he that hath this hope that purifies himself as God is pure. I know not what experience you have, but some of us know, that when our souls are most comforted and enlarged with the faith of God's favour through Christ, and with the hope of His goodness, then we have most heart to our duties; and when, through unbelief, we have harsh thoughts of God as an angry judge, then we have no heart to duties and religious exercises; and I persuade myself this is the experience of the saints in all ages.

There is thus an inseparable connection between our believing the love of God to us in Christ Jesus, holiness, and spiritual comfort. Unless we "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith," we cannot expect to have "our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water," (Hebrews 10:22). And as the blood of Jesus is our ground of confidence in coming to God at the first for forgiveness of our sins, our mainstay in trouble, and the spring of all worthy obedience, so must it be our only plea in approaching our heavenly Father for all needed spiritual blessings. If we wish to have our own souls quickened and revived, or a great work of the Spirit achieved throughout the land, and millions of souls converted, the name of Jesus must be our only plea, as we come to plead for these blessings at the throne of grace. Another says: In all true prayer, great stress should be laid on the blood of Jesus: perhaps no evidence distinguishes a declension in the power and spirituality of prayer more strongly than an overlooking of this. Where the atoning blood is kept out of view, not recognised, not pleaded, not made the grand plea, there is a deficiency of power in prayer. Words are nothing, fluency of expression nothing, niceties of language and brilliancy of thought nothing, where the blood of Christ - the new and living way of access to God, the grand plea that moves Omnipotence, that gives, admission within the holy of holies - is slighted, undervalued, and not made the groundwork of every petition. Oh, how much is this overlooked in our prayers - how is the atoning blood of Immanuel slighted! How little mention we hear of it in the sanctuary, in the pulpit, in the social circle! Whereas it is this that makes prayer what it is with God. All prayer is acceptable with God, and only so, as it comes up perfumed with the blood of Christ; all prayer is answered as it urges the blood of Christ as its plea; it is the blood of Christ that satisfies justice, and meets all the demands of the law against us; it is the blood of Christ that purchases and brings down every blessing into the soul; it is the blood of Christ that sues for the fulfilment of His last will and testament, every precious legacy of which comes to us solely on account of His death; this it is too that gives us boldness at the throne of grace. How can a poor sinner approach without this? How can he look up - how can he ask - how can he present himself before a holy God, - but as he brings in the hand of faith the precious blood of Jesus? Out of Christ, God can hold no communication with us; - all intercourse is suspended - every avenue of approach is closed - all blessing is withheld. God has crowned His dearly beloved Son, and He will have us crown Him too; and never do we place a brighter crown upon His blessed head than when we plead His finished righteousness as the ground of our acceptance, and His atoning blood as our great

argument for the bestowment of all blessing with God. If, then, dear reader, you feel yourself to be a poor, vile, unholy sinner -if a backslider, whose feet have wandered from the Lord, in whose soul the spirit of prayer has declined, and yet still feel some secret longing to return, and dare not, because so vile, so unholy, so backsliding; yet you may return, 'having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,' (Hebrews 10:19). Come, for the blood of Jesus pleads; return, for the blood of Jesus gives you welcome.

"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," (1 John 2:1). And if you are stirred in spirit for the souls of the perishing around you that they may be saved, and for the work of God that it may be revived, make mention of THE BLOOD OF JESUS, and you may rest satisfied that you "have the petitions, that you "desired of Him," (1 John 5:15). Jesus has passed His word, that on doing this you shall obtain the desires of your heart; for He says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you," (John 15:7). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give, it you... Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full," (John 16:23-24). If, then, there be no great revival of God's work, no great awakening and conversion of perishing souls, may it not be because this sin lieth at our door, that we have not used the blood of Jesus as our all-prevailing plea in prayer? Oh! let us no longer employ that "'precious blood "so sparingly in our pleadings for revival, but let us urge it as our only and our constant plea, and prove God herewith, whether He will not open to us the windows of heaven, and pour us out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it, (Malachi 3:10).

01.11. Blood of Jesus the Essence of the Gospel

Blood of Jesus the Essence of the Gospel Topics In This Chapter:

* The Most Effective Revival Preaching

* The Substratum Of Christianity

* The Spirit's Order Of Truth To Be Observed

* Christ And The Grand Theme Of Our Preaching OUR MATURED CONVICTION IS that the great thing needed at present is not so much revival sermons, or revival prayer-meetings, as REVIVAL TRUTH; and as the very essence of that truth is " the gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord," (Romans 1:1-2) or, in other words, the testimony of the Holy Ghost (externally in the preaching of the Word, and internally in its spiritual application) to the all-sufficiency and infallible efficacy of "THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST," (1 Peter 1:19), that which is pre-eminently required in order to the general revival of religion is a full, clear, intelligent, and earnest utterance of the grand leading doctrines of " the gospel of the grace of God," (Acts 20:24). True revival is not obtainable by merely preaching about revival, but by the constant proclamation of that all-important truth which is employed by the Holy Ghost to produce it,-that "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," (1 Peter 3:18). He will prove the most effective preacher in bringing about a holy, deep, spiritual revival, who gives the greatest prominence to these three great facts :-" That CHRIST DIED for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that HE WAS BURIED; and that He ROSE AGAIN the third day according to the Scriptures," (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). And I am convinced that the reason why so many ministers exhaust nearly all their converting power (I mean instrumentally) during the first few years of their ministry, while some continue to possess it, and finish their course with joy, is greatly owing to the former leaving the simplicity that is in Christ and betaking themselves to sermon-writing about secondary matters, while the latter make CHRIST CRUCIFIED their "Alpha and Omega." Oh that all the ministers of Jesus Christ would return, for a few months at least every year, to all the common texts from which they preached discourses which seemed to be so much blessed to awaken and save souls in the early days of their ministry! Were they to take a series of such texts as Matthew 11:28; John 3:16; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 2:2; 1 Timothy 1:12-17; 1 John 1:7; and, after restudying them, and bringing all the light of their reading, spiritual insight, and experience to bear upon the exposition and enforcement of them, to preach from them with the Holy Ghost, and with a lively faith, that, by the grace of the Holy Spirit accompanying their preaching, the unconverted among their people would be immediately converted, there might be a great and general awakening, and tens of thousands might be added to the Lord.

It is also of vast importance to present "the truth of the gospel" as the Holy Ghost himself has presented it to us in "the word of Christ," (Colossians 3:16). It has been well said that "the derangement of God's order of truth is quite as dangerous and far more subtle than the denial of the truth itself. In fact, to reverse the order is to deny the truth. We are not merely to maintain both

Christ's work and the Spirit's work in their individual integrity, but in their exact scriptural order." We believe that the refreshing truth, that "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin," (1 John 1:7), is the great central sun which sheds a flood of light on the whole system of divine revelation. Atonement by the blood-shedding of Christ is the substratum of Christianity; for the sole ground of a sinner's peace with God is " THE BLOOD OF JESUS." We who were at one time "far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ ; for he is our peace," (Ephesians 2:13-14), " in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins," (Ephesians 1:7); and so, " being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," (Romans 3:24-25), " we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God," (Romans 5:1-2). In the Westminster Assembly's "Shorter Catechism," which is considered by all orthodox people to be an excellent summary of Christian doctrine, you will find the very same truth stated which we have advanced and confirmed by the above quotations, and which we have been writing for publication almost daily for the last ten years. The answer to the question in that Catechism, "What doth God require of us that we may escape His wrath and curse due to us for sin?" commences with, "God requireth of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life," &c. Now, this shews that the framers of that symbol of sound doctrine were accurate in their conceptions, and precise in their statement of the order and position of this great scriptural truth. They suppose an anxious inquirer desirous of knowing how he is to escape the wrath and curse of God due to him for sin; and do they say that the first thing he is to do is to pray for the Holy Spirit, and get his mind changed, and his unholy heart sanctified, previously to his believing in Jesus? No. The very first thing they teach the awakened sinner to do is, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Now this is all the more remarkable, considering that, when laying down the system of divine truth theologically, they had placed effectual calling by the Divine Spirit before justification by faith. There they speak to the intellect of the converted man and instructed Christian; but here the matter is reversed when an anxious sinner is to be guided as to what he is to do to be saved, and we have faith in Jesus Christ placed before repentance unto life; shewing us that they held, that while we must ever acknowledge the necessity of the Holy Spirit's work in order to the creation and exercise of saving faith, we should never direct an anxious sinner to look to the Spirit as his Saviour, but to Christ alone; never direct an inquirer to seek first an inward change, but an outward one - a justified state in order to enjoying a sanctified heart - the former being the necessary precursor of the latter.

Repentance is, properly speaking, a change of mind, or a new mind about God; regeneration is a change of heart, or a new heart towards God; conversion is a change of life, or a new life for God; adoption is a change of family, or a new relationship to God; sanctification is a change of employment, or a consecration of all to God; glorification is a change of place, or a new condition with God; but justification, which is a change of state, or a new standing before God, must be presented to the anxious inquirer as going before all, for being "accepted in the Beloved" is the foundation and cause of all, or, more properly speaking, the "precious seed" from which all the rest spring, blossom, and bear fruit: and, consequently, the first and great duty of those who have to deal with awakened souls is to make this very clear, and to keep them incessantly in contact with the blessed evangelical truth, "That a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ," (Galatians 2:16). From all this you will observe, dear reader, that I am not settling the position which a doctrine in theology ought to hold, but simply dealing with the practical

necessities of an anxious inquirer. Were I called upon to state my views theoretically, I would say, they are described by what another has termed Jehovahism, "for of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever," (Romans 11:36); but I am not contemplating the sinner as standing before the throne of glory, but before the throne of grace; and I am not endeavouring to settle a subtle question in theology, but to give the practical solution of an urgent question of salvation. I am not attempting to lay down a system of divinity, but to discover the kind and order of truth divinely appointed and fitted to bring immediate peace to awakened and inquiring souls. And hoping to accomplish this most important end, I present "JESUS ONLY," "for He is our peace," who "having made peace through the blood of His cross," (Colossians 1:20), has come "and preached peace," (Ephesians 2:17), by His "everlasting gospel," to them "who were afar off, and to them that were nigh." The first practical step towards realising and acknowledging the sovereignty of God, is to "let the peace of God rule in your hearts," (Colossians 3:15). You may hold a sound creed with a proud, unbroken heart, and be more deeply damned on that very account. But if you wish to know God in all the glory of His being and attributes, you must grasp the manifestation of that glory as it is embodied and manifested in the person of Jesus Christ. You can know the glory of God as a sovereign only by realising His grace as a Saviour. For "God was manifest in the flesh," (1 Timothy 3:16). "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth," (John 1:14). "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him," (Matthew 11:27). A MIND AT 'PERFECT PEACE' WITH GOD; Oh, what a word is this! A SINNER RECONCILED THROUGH BLOOD; THIS, THIS, INDEED, IS PEACE!

"By nature and by practice far- How very far!-from God; Yet now by grace brought nigh to Him THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS' BLOOD.

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

"So dear, so very dear to God, More dear I cannot be; The love wherewith He loves the Son, Such is His love to me.

"Why should I ever careful be, Since such a God is mine?

He watches o'er me night and day, And tells me, 'MINE IS THINE.'

01.12. Holy Spirit's Testimony to the Blood of Jesus

Holy Spirit's Testimony to the Blood of Jesus Topics In This Chapter:

* What We Should Say To An Anxious Inquirer * Jesus Still The Saviour * Nature And Grace THE GREAT WORK WHICH THE Holy Spirit is now occupied in performing, is that of directing sinners to Jesus, and inclining and enabling them to come to Him, that they may be saved; and since this is the case, I am a fellow worker with God the Holy Spirit only in so far as I tell anxious sinners TO LOOK TO JESUS ONLY, and have "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins," as their first and great business; and "this one, thing I do." The question is not, whether do we think it scriptural for an awakened sinner to desire the secret and power-giving presence of the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of his understanding, and shew him the all-sufficiency of Christ. That is what neither we nor any other true Christian would for a moment think of forbidding. Nor is it the question, whether the work of the Holy Spirit be necessary in order to salvation. The very fact of writing as we have done on regeneration in a previous chapter, as well as writing to encourage our brethren to meet together, and also meeting ourselves, to pray for the Holy Spirit to put forth His reviving, sanctifying, convincing, and converting power, will satisfy all ingenuous minds that we hold the absolute necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in order to the regeneration and conversion of perishing souls. The only question, then, which falls to be considered is, What am I to say to an awakened and anxious sinner? Am I to say simply, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," (Acts 16:31), as said the apostle of the Gentiles to the trembling jailor of Philippi? or am I, as the first thing I do, to exhort him to pray for the Holy Spirit to convince him more deeply of his sin, enlighten his darkened understanding, renew his perverse will, and can able him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of his soul? Am I to direct him, as the grand thing he has to do, to believe in Jesus, and accept His blood-shedding as the only foundation of his peace with God; or to seek the work of the Spirit as an addition to Christ's work, in order that he may be justified ? The former leads to justification by faith alone, the true Apostolic doctrine of the Churches of the first age ; the latter leads to justification by sanctification, the pernicious doctrine of a later era, by embracing which a man can never reach any satisfactory assurance that his sins are pardoned, even after a lifetime's religious experience and devout and sincere performance of religious duties; whereas, by teaching salvation by the blood of Christ alone, a man may, like the Philippian jailor, "rejoice, believing in God with all his house," (Acts 16:34), "in the same hour" in which Christ is presented as the alone object of personal faith and consequent reconciliation.

There is, we regret to think, a large class of professing Christians who seem to have the unfounded notion engrained in their minds, that Christ came as a Saviour in the fulness of time, and on being rejected and received up into glory, the Holy Spirit came down to be the Saviour of sinners in His stead, and that whether men are now to be saved or lost depends entirely on the work of the Holy Spirit in them, and not on the work of Christ done for them; whereas the Holy Spirit was given as the crowning evidence that JESUS IS STILL THE SAVIOUR, even now that He is in heaven; and the great work of the Spirit is not to assume the place of Jesus as our Saviour,

but to bear witness to Christ Jesus as the only Saviour, and by His quickening grace bring lost sinners to Him, that they may become "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," (Galatians 3:26). This He did on the blessed day of Pentecost, when thousands of divinely quickened souls received His testimony, believed "in the name of Jesus," and obtained "remission of sins," (Acts 2:38). The Holy Ghost is not the Saviour, and He never professed to be so, but His great work, in so far as the unconverted are concerned, is to direct sinners to the Saviour, and to get them persuaded to embrace Him and rely upon Him. When speaking of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said distinctly to His disciples, "He shall not speak of himself. HE SHALL GLORIFY ME," (John 16:13-14). If to glorify Christ be the grand aim and peculiar work of the Holy Spirit, should it not also be the grand aim and constant work of those who believe in Him, and more especially of the ministers of His gospel? The whole drift of the Holy Spirit's inspired oracles, as we have them in the Bible, is to glorify Christ; and the gospel ministry has been granted by Him, (Ephesians 4:11-12), to keep the purport of those Scriptures incessantly before the minds of men, and in so doing to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God. Now, Holy Scripture throughout clearly teaches that, simply on account of the one, finished and all-sufficient and eternally efficacious work of Christ, sinners who believe in Him are "justified from all things;" that we are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood," (Romans 3:24-25); and we are justified as "sinners," as "ungodly," (Romans 5:6-8), and not as having an incipient personal righteousness wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. Few men, with the Word of God in their hands, would subscribe to such a doctrine; and yet it is the latent creed of the great majority of professing Christians. It is, in fact, the universal creed of the natural heart. Fallen human nature, when under terror, says, Get into a better state by all means; feel better, pray better, do better; become holier, and reform your life and conduct, and God will have mercy upon you! But grace says, "Behold, God is my salvation!" (Isaiah 12:2). To give God some equivalent for His mercy, either in the shape of an inward work of sanctification, or of an outward work of reformation, the natural man can comprehend and approve of; but to be justified by faith alone, on the ground of the finished work of Christ, irrespective of both, is quite beyond his comprehension. But "the foolishness of God is wiser than men," (1 Corinthians 1:25); for, instead of preaching holiness as a ground of peace with God, "we preach Christ crucified," (1 Corinthians 1:23), "for other foundation can no man lay" -either for justification or sanctification-"than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," (1 Corinthians 3:11); and, whatever others may do, I am "determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified," (1 Corinthians 2:2).

"O my Redeemer, who for me wast slain,
Who bringest me forgiveness and release,
Whose death has ransomed me to God again,
And now my heart can rest in perfect peace!

Still more and more do Thou my soul redeem,
From every bondage set me wholly free;
Though evil oft the mightiest power may seem,
Still make me more than conqueror, Lord, in Thee!"

S. A Brief Outline of the Epistle to the Hebrews

A Brief Outline of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Hebrews 1:1-14. The subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews is Jesus the Son of God crowned with glory and honour at God's right hand, and the heavenly system of blessing and glory centring in Him, founded on His redemptive work. The object of the epistle is evidently to detach the minds and hearts of the Hebrew Christians from the earthly system of Judaism, which was but the shadow of the heavenly, and to direct their gaze to Jesus in heaven in whom dwelt the substance. Of old, God had spoken to the fathers of Israel in various ways, giving in the different dispensations fragments of divine revelation; but in the Person of the Son, God had given a perfect and complete revelation of Himself. None but the Son could reveal God, for only a divine Person could make God known in His nature and counsels of love. Here, as elsewhere, the Spirit delights to unfold the varied glories of the Son, glories consonant with the subject before the writer of the epistle. The first cluster of glories brings out what the Son is to God:

(1) He is God's appointed heir;

(2) By Him, God made the world;

(3) He is the brightness of God's glory;

(4) He is the expression of God's substance. The next cluster of glories sets forth the Son in His own might and greatness:

(1) He upholds all things by the word of His own power;

(2) He made by Himself purification for sins:

(3) He set Himself down at the right hand of the majesty on high. Then follows the greatness of the Son as compared with angels. the most exalted of God's creatures. His place is much better than the angels; and He has inherited a Name, the Name of Son of God, which is more excellent than all angelic names. Angels are called upon to worship the Son, being the messengers of God and the executors of His judgment; but the Son is addressed by God as God, having an eternal throne and a kingdom governed in righteousness. Yet while very God, the Son is truly and perfect Man; and because of His perfection as Man, He has supreme joy among the companions given to Him as God's anointed.

If the Son is the creator of Genesis 1:1-31, He is also the Jehovah seen in relation to His creation in Genesis 2:1-25, for here He is saluted with "And Thou, Jehovah, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth. . ." This is quoted from Psalms 102:1-28, being God's answer to His suffering and death. As Jehovah, He is compared with His works; His glory transcending all in the creation, which is growing old and shall perish, but the Son abides "The Same," the unchanging One. The present creation as a vesture sets forth His glory, but after serving His present purpose it will be folded up; but it is also a covering to be rolled up in the changing of the elements, which

when accomplished will display His eternal purpose and glory in the new heavens and new earth. With this in view, God has set His Son down at His right hand until His enemies are made His footstool. This is not the portion of angels they are ministering spirits who wait upon those who shall inherit God's great salvation.

Hebrews 2:1-18. Because of the character of the present revelation men should give earnest heed to it; for if such as Lot's wife did not escape when she disobeyed the angelic word "Look not behind thee," how will any one escape the more terrible judgment awaiting those who neglect the great salvation, spoken by the Lord on earth, and con-firmed by the testimony of His disciples. As Apostle, the Lord Jesus inaugurated this great salvation; as High Priest He saves to the uttermost those who come to God by Him. The world to come, which subject forms an integral part of the epistle, has not been put under angels, but has been subjected to Man in Christ, the Son of Man. Although lower in rank than angels, Adam was the lord and head of the lower creation, and as such was the figure of Him to come. Jesus, though higher than angels, so that He might die became a little lower than the angels (He became Man); and in His death has established an additional claim to the universe He inherits as Son, of which He is the creator and anointed Man. Having tasted death by entering into its dread reality, the Lord Jesus has been crowned with glory and honour; and the saints are privileged to see Him where He is, by faith, while awaiting the day in which there will be the public demonstration, in a display of glory, that all things are put under His feet.

Those who shall inherit salvation are the companions of Christ and the sons of God; and in bringing His many sons to glory, God has given to Jesus the position of Captain of their salvation. Because of all He suffered here, the Lord Jesus is perfectly qualified to bring God's many sons home to Him in the glory, safely through all the trials of the wilderness He knows so well. Christ is not ashamed of God's sons, His brethren, for they are all of one with Him, having His Spirit, His life, and His nature; and to them He makes known the Father's Name in the midst of the assembly, where He sings praise to Him. All this proves how real Christ's Manhood is: He is Son of Man; He has died; He has brethren; God has given Him children from among men; He took part in flesh and blood; He suffered being tempted; and was found in the place of dependence trusting in God. As risen from among the dead Christ's Manhood is unchanged, but He has entered into entirely new conditions; and it is with Him, on the other side of death, that we are associated as His brethren and sons of God; and it is beyond death that the Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one.

One of the specific reasons for Jesus becoming Man was to deliver the children from the fear of death. To effect this He entered the "strong man's" domain, and annulled the despot's power. Like David, He slew the giant with his own sword: like Mordecai, He became the deliverer of His people from the hand of the tyrant who was hung upon his own gallows: like Moses, He led His people through the region of death, in which the oppressor and his host were overwhelmed.

Jesus, in grace, has espoused the cause of fallen men, not that of fallen angels; and because of this, in all the details of life He was made like to His brethren, in knowing sorrow, sufferings, hunger, thirst, weariness, and such things. Knowing all these He can be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things relating to God; entering with feeling into all the circumstances of His people, and bringing to them perfect help in their trials. Before entering upon this priestly work, He made propitiation for the sins of the people that every bit of dread might be taken from their hearts. It is

noticeable that it does not say that He laid hold of the seed of Israel, else the blessing would have been confined to Israel; nor does it say that He laid hold of the seed of Adam; for Scripture does not teach universal salvation; but it says "the seed of Abraham," because Christ has espoused the cause of those who believe, the children of the faithful one.

Hebrews 3:1-19. Being Christ's brethren, and sanctified with Him as the Sanctifier, the saints are holy brethren. Israel's calling was earthly, and Moses was their apostle and Aaron their high priest; but our calling is heavenly, and Jesus is both our Apostle and High Priest; so that the Christian system is in marked contrast to Judaism. The Tabernacle was God's dwelling place, and Moses' work there serves to indicate the greatness of Christ's place in God's house. Moses was faithful as a ministering servant, but Christ is faithful as Son. Moses completed the Tabernacle in detail according to the divine instructions, carrying out faithfully the revealed mind of God; but how much greater is the glory of Him who designed and built the vast universe? Christ is the builder of the universe, for He is God, and in the wide universe the glory of the creator shines out. A similar contrast between the bondman and the Son is made in John 8:1-59, where the Son gives us liberty in which we are truly free. Solomon is a type of Christ as Son over God's house, where God says to David in connection with the building of the Temple, "I will be to him for Father and he shall be to me for son." If the house is to be ordered according to the mind of God, only the Son, who knows all His will and purpose can so order it. The house is not a material one as was the Tabernacle (and the Temple), but is composed of men and women, who bear this character, if they hold fast the truth of Christianity. If the Hebrews forsook the boldness belonging to the Christian system and returned to the bondage of law, how could they have the character of the house of God which pulsed with life and liberty? When the Lord was on earth, the Temple had lost its true character as God's house, and at the close He spoke of it to the Jews as "Your house"; and in 2nd Timothy that which still bore the name of God's house is likened to "A great house," where there are vessels to dishonour mingled with the vessels unto honour. Our hope is heaven and the rest of God, but in the mean-time, the Christian (like Israel in the wilderness) is passing through a scene where he must be in constant dependence upon God for supplies. While in the wilderness there is ever the danger of going back; therefore are we warned in Hebrews 2:1-18 of slipping away, and here of hardening the heart. The Holy Spirit in Psalms 95:1-11 warned Israel that they were in danger of failing as their fathers before them and again, at the beginning of Christianity, there was need for the repetition of the warning. Israel's whole sojourn in the wilderness was a day of provocation for God, because of their refusing to listen to His voice. Seeing God's wonderful works, they were yet ignorant of His ways, and this because of the state of their unbelieving hearts. There are two if's in this portion: "If ye will hear His voice " and "If ye shall enter into my rest." Only those who listen to the voice of God, hearing it by faith, will enter into His rest; but this on account of God's settled purpose to bring believers there. God's rest in creation was soon broken by sin; nor did Israel enter God's rest but God will assuredly have a rest, where He Himself shall rest and His people with Him.

There is another warning in Hebrews 3:12 against turning away from the living God; but they were to encourage themselves in the day of grace, which would not always last. Many who took the place of Christians might be mere professors; but only real Christians were Christ's companions, although the others by their profession claimed to be such. The condition of the heart, not profession, proves what one really is, even as is illustrated in the host of Israel. All were in the

position of the people of God; how few were right in heart towards Him. Three events are adduced to bring out Israel's true state:

(1) Their provocation at the Red Sea;

(2) Their sin at Sinai (3) Their refusal of the report of the goodly land brought by the spies.

Judgment did not result from the first as the people were not yet under law: the third was the crowning sin which revealed the source of every murmur, "unbelief."

Hebrews 4:1-16. Reverential fear becomes the people of God; the absence of it endangers the soul. Where no fear of God exists there is no faith in His word; and only those who believe will enter into His rest. It is not enough to be publicly associated with those who receive the good news from God; there must be living faith if we are to profit by the word, for the absence of faith deprived Israel of entering the rest of God. Faith produces fear of God the fear evincing that faith exists. Divine grace in no wise sets aside our responsibility; indeed it is in our responsible life that we show the fruits of divine grace. The very Scripture which mentions the doubt of Israel entering God's rest speaks of His determinate purpose to have some there. This rest, which awaits the people of God, was typified in the rest of creation on the seventh day; and although that rest was broken, God has not turned from His purpose to have His rest; no, nor has Israel's unbelief affected this purpose. From the Spirit's witness in David (in Psalms 95:1-11) it is evident that when Joshua led Israel into Canaan, he did not bring them into the rest of God; nor had they entered it in David's day; so that the conclusion of the matter is, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." We have not yet come to this rest, being in a world of toil; but after the days of labour are ended we shall surely have the rest, even as God rested when His work was done. With the rest in view, we are to be marked by diligence which faith begets, and not by indifference to the word of God.

God's word, which addresses itself to us, is living and operative; comes from the living God, and works in living power in the heart of him who receives it. The word is the living instrument which brings God's thoughts to His people, and maintains them in living touch with Himself and its penetrating and divisive qualities in a moral way are greater than those of the sharpest human weapon in material things, for it enters into the heart and divides what is natural from that wrought there by the Spirit of God. The word also enables us to distinguish between our movements and the springs that actuate those movements and gives us to discern the true character of all our thoughts and the intentions of the heart. How indispensable and invaluable all this is to the Christian; to be capable, as the word of God has its place within us, to test every inward spring, every feeling, every motive, every desire, and every action; so that the unsparing judgment of God might be brought upon all that proceeds from the flesh, and to delight in all produced by the word in the Spirit's power. When the word enters the heart it discovers every secret, and brings us consciously into the presence of Him who knows all about us. This is great gain for the Christian, for this knowledge leads him to order his course in the sense of being constantly under the all-seeing eye of God.

Passing through the wilderness to the rest of God we have therefore all the help of the word of God; and besides, the help of the Priest, Jesus the Son of God. To enter God's presence, Aaron passed through the court of the Tabernacle, through the holy place, and into the holiest; but Jesus

in ascending to His place in glory has passed through the heavens. Knowing this, we can hold fast the Christian profession in the exercise of faith. Although so great and glorious, our great High Priest enters into all the feelings of our troubled hearts, having, while here, passed through all the testings of the path He has called us to tread. But all His temptations were from without; there was nothing within of sin to entice Him. Our names, written on His breast, tell of the sympathy of a loving heart in regard to all we are passing through down here; our names written on His shoulders assure us that His strength is available for us in our great weakness. The throne of God, by reason of man's sin, became for him a throne of judgment; now, through Christ's precious shed blood it is for us a throne of grace. Approaching the throne, not with cringing fear, but with holy boldness, knowing that Jesus is there for us, we receive the mercy needed for each step of the desert, and obtain the grace for seasonable help.

Hebrews 5:1-14. Israel's high priests were established to represent men before God, to offer the different gift offerings and the sacrifices for sins. Being frail, failing men they could enter into the conditions of those they represented: but required to have the efficacy of the sin offering for themselves also, because of their own state. Aaron's honoured office was not his by his own choosing, but by divine call, as Korah and his companions learned to their cost. In calling the Lord Jesus to the Priesthood, God has crowned Him with glory and honour; and the Spirit of God tells us that it is God's Son who has been addressed as "Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." So that if the calling of Christ's Priesthood is signified in the Aaronic priesthood, the order of His Priesthood is according to Melchisedec's.

Before entering into the glory, the Lord Jesus knew what it was to be suffering in the place of dependence, and this in all its depths in Gethsemane and on the cross. The pious Man cried "My God I cry by day, and thou answerest not; and by night there is no rest for me," yet is He able to say on reaching the limits of death's power, "Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns." The Son, who had ever commanded, learned obedience in these circumstances of suffering; and having perfectly known obedience thus, became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. He was delivered, saved out of death, after passing through all its judgment, because of His piety and obedience; He will therefore save those who obey Him from all that is against them, whether from death, the power of Satan, or any other enemy or trial in the wilderness. This salvation, an eternal salvation, that will bring us safely through the wilderness to the glory, is originated by One addressed by God as high priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of Christ, the writer had much to say to the Hebrews, but it was difficult to make it known to them because of their low state: indeed, they required the elements of Christianity rather than advanced instruction. They ought to have been teachers, but they were not skilled in the foundations, the word of righteousness; they were in need of milk, having got into a very weak spiritual condition. Solid food belongs to matured Christians, who, by habitually feeding on the word, are exercised in their spiritual sensibilities to discern what is good and what is evil.

Hebrews 6:1-20. Although the Hebrews were in such an immature state, the writer would not proceed to speak of the elements of Christianity, but would go on to what belonged to the full-grown man. The foundations of the faith lie in repentance, faith, the teaching of baptism, what is involved in association with others, the truth of the resurrection, and eternal judgment. From apostasy there was no recovery; those once enlightened with the light of Christianity, and who deliberately turn from it, cannot come back in repentance. Such have never been true Christians,

they have never had divine life in their souls. They have tasted of the heavenly gift, but it was never appropriated: they spat it out; they partook outwardly of the Holy Spirit, as Balaam and Saul the King, had done long before; they tasted, but had not eaten the good word of God; and had come into the benefits of the Spirit's presence in God's house. They were so near to the blessing, yet they despised it; and after professing to accept Christ, they rejected Him, thus crucifying Him for themselves, and exposing Him as One to be refused. God will not suffer this fresh insult to His Son! These apostates had been where the rain, the blessing from God, came; but instead of useful herbs they had brought forth thorns and briars, meriting the unsparing judgment that would certainly come upon them. Even if speaking thus, the writer was persuaded better things of the Hebrews, having the conviction that salvation was theirs. Nor was God unmindful of all that had marked the saints hitherto, their work, their love, their ministry to the saints; yet the journey was not over, and they were to go on until the end, imitating the faith and patience of such as Abraham.

God had made promise to Abraham, but long patience was needed before its fulfilment; a promise of which there was no doubt, for God confirmed His word by an oath, swearing by Himself, since there was no greater. How blessed to see the condescension of God, coming down to our creature weakness to show in a human way the immutability of His purpose; He first promised, then confirmed it with an oath, to give strong encouragement to the heirs of promise. Like the manslayer of old, we have fled to the city of refuge, to lay hold upon a heavenly hope. Israel in rejecting and crucifying Christ destroyed their earthly hopes; God, in mercy, has through the intercession of Christ on the cross, treated them as manslaughterers rather than as murderers, and so has opened up to them the city of refuge. Their hope is no longer an earthly one, but heavenly; it is an anchor of the soul both sure and firm, connected with Jesus within the heavenly veil, who has gone there as our forerunner. Within the veil, where we shall soon be with Jesus, He is a high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Hebrews 7:1-28. Melchisedec was a suitable person to typify the Lord Jesus as God's Priest; he was King of Salem and priest of the Most High God. This King of righteousness and King of peace is presented without antecedent or descendent, without birth or death, as a subsisting priest; and is so great that he blesses Abraham, and receives from Abraham the tenth of all the spoils of war. Thus, in Abraham, the Levitical priesthood acknowledges the superiority of the priesthood of Melchisedec, both by paying tithes and in receiving blessing, for the inferior is blessed by the greater.

Since God had announced that Christ's priesthood was after the order of Melchisedec, it clearly implied that His highest thoughts were not connected with the Levitical order; and since the law was based upon the Levitical priesthood, a change of priesthood necessitated a change of law also. The law had never contemplated a priest from any other tribe than Levi, but Jesus came from Judah, of which Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood; and the change of law is more abundantly evident because the different priest has been constituted in the power of indissoluble life, and not according to the fleshly ordinance of the law. Christ's priesthood being for ever involves the setting aside of the commandment of the law regarding priests. The old system perfected nothing; man's conscience was not perfected regarding his sins, nor was there access to God; but in the new system of Christianity, with its better hope, we can draw near to God.

Israel's priests though called of God, were not priests by a divine oath, else they could not be set aside; but Christ is Priest by the swearing of an oath, even as it is written, "The Lord has sworn and will not repent, Thou art priest for ever." So that Christ's priesthood is irrevocable through the oath that makes Him the guarantor of a better covenant. Death prevented the Aaronic priests continuing in office, but Christ, who ever lives, has His priesthood intransmissible; therefore can He save right through to the end of the wilderness those who approach God by Him, ever living to intercede for them. Such then is the greatness and the superiority of God's priest, established in relation to a heavenly system, with a better covenant and an eternal salvation, with a better hope and with better promises; where we can approach God in holy boldness.

Now we have the moral perfections of our great High Priest; a priest becoming those called with a heavenly calling, who are God's sons and Christ's brethren. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become higher than the heavens. His features are delightful to God, who has given Him a place of exaltation and majesty, yea, the highest place in the universe. Unlike the Levitical priests, He needed not to offer sacrifice for Himself; He was infinitely pure; holy in nature; harmless in all His activities; undefiled in all His movements; separate, in all the thoughts and feelings of His heart, from sinners. But He offered up a sacrifice for sinners in the giving of Himself; He was the perfect sin offering, so perfect that it needed not to be repeated. Priests ordained by the law were frail, failing sinners; but the word and the oath of God (although subsequent to the giving of the law) constituted His own Son a Priest. As Priest, God's Son is perfected for ever; perfected as having thoroughly qualified for the office in circumstances of sorrow and suffering, and as having been set down by God at His own right hand from whence He can minister to His own.

Hebrews 8:1-13. The things engaging us in these chapters are summed up for us in the beginning of this chapter. Our High Priest is so great that He has set Himself down on the right hand of the throne of the greatness in the heavens. First, the greatness of the priest is noted, "We have such a One high priest;" there is also the greatness of His office, "High priest;" then the greatness of the place He occupies, "The right hand of the greatness in the heavens;" and the greatness of His ministry, "Minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle." How the greatness of the Person of Jesus is manifested in setting Himself down at God's right hand! Who but a divine Person could take this place? The tabernacle that Moses pitched was but the shadow of the true tabernacle, the divine, heavenly system of glory and blessing, founded on the finished work of the cross, where the saints draw near to God. So that the Lord's ministry is not only in contrast to Aaron's, it is also the substance of what was foreshadowed in Aaron's. In dressing the lamps in the holy place for the maintenance of the light over against the candlestick, Aaron was indicating how that Christ, during the night of His absence from the world, would sustain His own in testimony, bringing out in them His own heavenly features, for the pleasure of God. There was also the ministry belonging to the table and the showbread, which foreshadowed how Christ would keep Israel before the eye of God until He renews His public dealings with them. The Minister of the Sanctuary is within the holiest, having the golden censer; maintaining His own there in the savour of His own Person, and as a company of worshippers for God's glory and delight.

Christ as the antitype of the high priest must have something to offer, answering to the gifts and sacrifices of the law; but His priesthood is heavenly, not earthly; and His Ministry includes that of mediator of a better covenant, established on better promises. While building the tabernacle,

Moses was instructed by God to make it according to the pattern shown him on the mount; for the earthly building was but the shadow of the heavenly things introduced by Christ as mediator, and maintained by Him as High Priest. This heavenly ministry of the risen and glorified Christ is more excellent than that of Moses and Aaron. Had the covenant made with Israel at Sinai been faultless there would not have been the need for another covenant; hence the new covenant is of an entirely different order from the first. This new covenant was intimated to Israel through the prophet Jeremiah, and was to be made with both the houses of Israel. Israel had not kept the first covenant, hence God had set them aside; but the new covenant could not be broken by Israel, for it did not rest on their doing, but on what God would do. God's laws were not to be presented on tables of stone, as at Sinai, but He would give them in their minds and write them also upon their hearts, where, in the sovereign working of God they would be kept for the glory of God and the blessing of His redeemed people. Therefore would the knowledge of God be in the hearts and minds of His people, so that they would not require to be recalled to Him, as in the past; and having remembered their sins at the cross, He would remember them no more. The word NEW covenant involves the passing away of the old.

Hebrews 9:1-28. The first covenant was connected with a system of ordinances, and its sanctuary was a worldly one: all the furniture and other articles having special typical value, yet themselves belonging to a system of religion for man in the flesh. (It may be profitable to look briefly at the typical meaning of these things. The holiest is God's dwelling-place, where we can enter the holy place indicating the future place of Israel's priests. Christ is the candlestick, whose beauty is seen by the light which the Spirit produces in the saints; as the table He is our support, and we feed upon Him as the true showbread. Normally, the golden censer would be kept in the holy place, but it went with the high priest into the holiest once a year; now that Christ has entered into God's presence, the censer, and all it speaks of abides in God's presence. The absence of the altar of incense may be on account of its function being taken up by the golden censer; the fragrance of Christ's Person, all His moral excellency and perfections, subsists before God continually. Christ's perfect Manhood and divine glory are seen in the ark covered with gold; the golden pot with the manna tells that God has treasured up in the glorified One the remembrance of all that He was as the Man of sorrows here. In Aaron's rod that budded we see Christ's priesthood confirmed in the power of resurrection (He lives in the power of an endless life); while in the tables of the covenant we see every thought of God for man fully and perfectly answered in His own Son. The cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat are the witnesses that every demand of the throne of God, in righteousness and holiness, has been met in Christ and in the shedding of His blood.) The ordering of the first system distinctly showed that man remained at a distance from God; he could not come within the veil. And this is the system of things upon which the great systems of Christendom have fashioned themselves. Their great buildings have railed off portions, from which the people are excluded in their worship. Then in the first order of things there was a priesthood coming between the people and God; and this too we find in the great religious systems of today. Into the holiest the high priest only could go, and that but once a year on the day of atonement, when he sprinkled the blood on the mercy-seat and seven times before it. All this showed that Israel remained at a distance from God, with the conscience unrelieved by all the ordinances, ordinances which only touched the flesh, and given until God made known what was in His heart for man's blessing. In marked contrast to the system of things spoken of, a system of good things, promised in connection with Messiah, has been established in Christ. These things belong to the

better and more perfect tabernacle, not of the old creation, nor through the sacrifices of animals. Christ's priesthood is not by the blood-shedding of calves and bulls, but by His own blood; that is He does not present sacrifices like the priests of old, but His priestly ministry relates to the work He wrought for God's glory on the cross. Having finished the work given Him to do here on earth, the Lord Jesus has entered into the presence of God having found an eternal redemption. When Aaron entered in, he had to come out again and go in the following year, the sacrifice enabled God to go on with Israel for one year only but Christ has no need to come out in regard to His sacrificial work, the redemption He has found is eternal in its efficacy. The blood shed on the day of atonement, and the ashes of the Red Heifer, had no intrinsic value; their sanctification only related to what was external, to man's flesh, the cleansing of the body; but the precious blood of Jesus purifies the conscience, and enables us to worship the living God. How great is the work of the cross, how precious the blood of Christ! On the cross He was the spotless victim, and He was the true offerer who offered Himself to God by the eternal Spirit. Here is a sacrifice in marked contrast to the beasts offered under the law, but He is the great anti-type of them all He is the true sin offering to which every sin offering pointed. See how the Trinity is engaged in the work of the cross! The Son is the offerer and the offering; it is by the eternal Spirit He offers Himself: and the offering is to God (surely the Father), to secure His will. All the works of the law were dead works, they could not bring peace to the performer; but the blood of Jesus sets the Christian free in conscience from all connected with that order of things so that he might truly worship God as revealed in Jesus.

Although the sacrifices of old could not remove the guilt of the offerer, where there was faith in God there was blessing. There could not be the revelation of the truth of redemption as now known in the death of Christ, nor could there be the knowledge in the heart of no more conscience of sins; nevertheless God, in view of the sacrifice of Christ, could remit the sins of those who believed in Him. Therefore we see Christ presented as mediator of a new covenant, secured by His death, by which there is redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant: and those called to partake of the blessings of the new covenant receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. This is in marked contrast with the law, which if Israel had kept they would have retained the earthly inheritance: but those partaking of the heavenly calling receive their inheritance by divine promise; it does not rest on their responsibility and cannot therefore be lost. In natural things, a testament has no force until the one who has disclosed in it his disposition has died. So it was in connection with the law: when the commandments were given there was the evidence of death in the blood sprinkled on the book and the people. It was a covenant of blood which bound the people to the book of the law whose commandments they had promised to keep. When the tabernacle was set up, it was sprinkled with blood; as were also all the vessels of service belonging to it. These figurative things emphasised that all God's dealings with man depended on blood shedding; and the truth, now fully revealed, is that without shedding of blood there is no remission. This divine necessity was therefore evinced in the representation of the heavenly things being purified by blood, but the heavenly things required a better sacrifice, the death of the Lord Jesus.

Christ, in verse 12 (Hebrews 9:12), has entered into God's presence, having glorified Him in accomplishing an eternal redemption: but verse 24 (Hebrews 9:24) shows that He has also entered there on our account, as our representative before God's face. Like Aaron He has two sets of

garments; the linen garments in which the work of atonement was performed; the garments of glory and beauty, in which the names of

God's people were engraved on His heart and on His shoulders. Both garments are involved in verse 24 (Hebrews 9:24), for Christ is there as having secured an eternal redemption which glorifies God and brings eternal blessing to us, and as representing His own, bearing their names in God's presence, before His face. But Christ is not in heaven as the high priest of yore was annually in the holiest; Christ is there with His own precious blood, the blood of a sacrifice which needs no repeating because of its abiding efficacy. Once He appeared on earth, in the consummation of the ages, for the removal of sin by His own sacrifice: now He appears in the presence of God for us; soon He will appear for the salvation of His people. Because of sin, the sentence of death lies upon the whole human race, and divine judgment follows death, at the great white throne; but Christ has borne the sins of many, the sins of all who believe in Him, so that they no longer fear death, and have been delivered from the judgment. His saints do not look for death; they look for Christ, who is coming the second time, not to offer another sacrifice for sins, but to save His people from every foe, whether the church at the rapture, or Israel when He comes out of heaven to put the earth right.

Hebrews 10:1-39. The good things of Christianity although foreshadowed in the law could not be clearly seen there. For example, although man's approach to God was envisaged, it never could have been discovered there that men would be allowed into the holiest, to be there with holy boldness in the light of the full revelation of God. Moral cleansing was in the shadow of the law, but not in the perfect way disclosed in the teaching of the Gospel. Although the annual sacrifices foreshadowed redemption, they had no intrinsic value; they could not give the worshippers the knowledge of sins forgiven once and for all; else there would not have been the necessity for repeating the sacrifices year by year. How blessed for us in Christianity to have no more conscience of sins, to realise that all our sins have gone completely through the shedding of the precious blood of Jesus. Instead of removing sins, the yearly sacrifices brought sins to remembrance; ever reminding the people that their sins were there, for indeed the divine sentence of the sacrificial system of the law is, "for blood of bulls and goats (is) incapable of taking away sins."

Coming into the world, as fulfilling the words written concerning Him in the book of God's counsel, the Lord declares by His presence that the accomplishing of God's will is bound up with Himself and not with the sacrifices and offerings of the Levitical system. God had no pleasure in the death of the animals sacrificed on the altars of Israel but how deep and infinite His pleasure in the One who said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will." Thus God has taken away the first order that gave Him no pleasure, that He might establish a new order, founded on the death of Christ. God's will, established in this new order of things, sets apart the Christian for the pleasure of God; and this by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. How great then is our blessing in Christianity: we have no more conscience of sins; and God Himself has set us apart to be for Him, through the death of Christ. The former blessing comes through the shedding of Jesus' blood the latter by the offering of His body. The work, and consequences of the work of Christ, are in marked contrast to what the priests in Israel wrought and ministered. Every priest stood, but Christ sat down, His was a finished work. Every priest stood daily; but Christ sits down in perpetuity; there is no repetition of the work. Every priest ministered often, but Christ needed only to carry out this ministry once,

because His precious blood is infinite and eternal in its efficacy. Every priest ministered often the same sacrifice, but Christ offered the ONE sacrifice of abiding value. The sacrifices of the priests could never take away sins; Christ's sacrifice is indeed a sacrifice for sins. Now, sitting at God's right hand, in the acceptance of the great work He has wrought, Christ, in fulfilment of Psalms 110:1, awaits the time when His enemies are put beneath His feet. Because of this great work, Christ has given us, the sanctified company, a perfection that can never be lost. He sits down in perpetuity we are perfected in perpetuity. We are completely rid of our sins by the wonderful and glorious sacrifice of Christ!

If Israel under law could not know this wonderful blessing the Holy Spirit had nevertheless witnessed concerning it in the Old Testament. In Jeremiah 31:33-34, the Holy Spirit foretold through the Prophet the blessings of the New Covenant. Those blessed under this covenant, which depends entirely upon the goodness of God, will have His laws in their hearts and minds; and He will never again remember their sins and iniquities. Every sin, every iniquity, is remembered at the cross, where God deals with them all in the death of His Son: but having fully dealt with them once, having remembered every one then: they are gone in the death of Jesus, and He remembers them NO MORE. Our sins then having been remitted through that ONE sacrifice, what need is there for any other sacrifice for sins? If the poor Roman Catholic knew the meaning of this precious passage of Scripture, he would not want any other sacrifices. The Priesthood of Christ having been established, the great character of Christ's sacrifice having been brought out in detail, and the results of that sacrifice and its application to us having been clearly unfolded, we are exhorted to enter the Holiest, the very presence of God. How wonderful, that we, once poor sinners, can come before God, where our spirits can range over the vast sphere of Christ's glories, our hearts can rest in His deep perfections: and we can give to our God the praise and worship that give Him pleasure. At all times, whether individually or in the assembly, though our feet are touching this barren wilderness, our spirits can be in the presence of God; and this is the Holiest. There we can learn, in God's own company, the meaning of the gold and acacia wood, and of the variegated colours of the sanctuary; and understand something of the deep significance of the furniture and vessels which speak of Christ to our hearts. Our approach to God is by the blood of Jesus, in the boldness produced by "no more conscience of sins: not in the old way of Judaism, in which there was no real approach, but in the new way of Christianity, where everything lives in the life of God. This is not down here, but within the veil, in the immediate presence of God: and in order that we might have part in that living system, the Word became flesh, and in death secured our title to enter there. In resurrection He is our "Great Priest," and with Him we can enter within the veil. But the heart must be true; we could not be in God's presence with a wrong thought or feeling, or in ignorance of the God revealed in Jesus. We might be before Him as suppliants if ignorant of the true character of God made known in the cross; but the full assurance of faith is produced by the heart resting in what He is thus, and in knowing that God delights to have us in His presence. God, too, has given us the suited state for His presence: like the priests of old we have been sprinkled and washed: our hearts have been sprinkled by the blood of Jesus, and the word has morally purified us, removing the defilement of our old state.

Approach is our present portion, but soon we shall be for ever in God's presence: this is our hope. Therefore are we exhorted to hold fast the confession of the hope unwavering, realising that God will soon fulfil His promise, and bring us into His rest. But we are also to think of each other, and to

regulate our conduct in the light of the approaching day. Apostasy will receive a fearful judgment, for some, having embraced Christianity, gave it up and returned to Judaism, thereby insulting the Spirit of grace, and treading on the Son of God, and treating Christ's blood a common thing. In the earlier days the Hebrew Christians had suffered much for Christ: but they were in danger of slackening and drawing back. They required endurance, so that they might continue to do God's will. It would be but a very little while to Christ's coming, and faith would keep them going on till the end.

Hebrews 11:1-40. The just live by faith, and it is by faith the soul is saved; so faith has a very important place in the life of the Christian, therefore does the Spirit of God deal with it at some length in this chapter, pressing its importance in an epistle that views the Christian passing through the wilderness. Faith lays hold on God, and manifests itself in obedience to His will: counting upon Him to fulfil His promises, and displaying an energy that overcomes every obstacle. Two of faith's main features are brought before us in the opening verse of this chapter: it gives the present substance of what is actually in prospect, and brings the reality of what is spiritual and heavenly into the soul. Faith brings to us now the light of the world to come, and the understanding of what exists now in relation to God and His Christ in heaven. In the power of this faith, the elders have obtained testimony; for they laid hold by faith on what lay ahead, and on what lay outside the natural vision. It is by faith too that we apprehend how the creation came into being. We refuse all the theories and speculations of men, for they cannot take account of what lies outside the natural senses; we know by faith that all sprung into existence by the word of God; "He spake, and it was done."

Abel's faith discerned the need for a sacrifice of blood, which was more excellent than Cain's, the fruit of a cursed earth; for which he received God's approbation, and in which he speaks even until now. He witnesses to the Gospel of God, in telling us, in his sacrifice, that if we desire to be accepted of Him we must present a spotless victim, whose excellency is pleasurable to God. Enoch, the man who pleased God, was taken up to heaven without seeing death: his faith recording that God is able to set death aside. Here then are two men who pleased God; one by the character of his sacrifice, the other by his walk; both evincing the faith that delights the heart of God. Those who approach God, must approach in faith: believing in a living God, altogether interested in us, and rewarding those who believing in Him, seek Him out. If Enoch's faith tells us that God is able to set death aside, Noe's instructs us in the truth of salvation from judgment. Hearing God's word, and believing it, Noah builds the ark for the salvation of his house: an act which condemned the world in his acceptance of God's verdict that it must be destroyed. This faith made him an heir of righteousness. In Abraham we have the obedience of faith, in relation to the calling and inheritance of God; and the faith that makes the called a stranger and sojourner here, while awaiting the heavenly city that God builds. Sarah's faith laid hold on the divine promise, and it gave her strength to accomplish what was contrary to nature.

Having lived by faith, the heirs of God's promise died in faith but their lives were lived in the power of what had been promised. The promises were not realised in this life, for they really belonged to the world to come, where God has given them a better, heavenly country, and has prepared for them a heavenly city. Our present life is therefore in strangership here, not dwelling on the earth, but sojourning not having our hearts and minds in the world we have left behind, but seeking what is heavenly, knowing that God is not ashamed to be called the God of such a heavenly-minded

people.

Abraham's faith rested in the God of resurrection, so that when tested, he offered up his only begotten son. He knew that God's promises were connected with Isaac, and therefore that God would raise him if he were put to death; and indeed, he received him back as from the dead. Isaac's faith comes out in his taking account of the future, when blessing his sons, for faith is the substantiating of things hoped for. Jacob's faith shines brightly when he is about to depart this life, blessing Joseph's sons in the light of God's purpose, worshipping in dependence, and manifesting until the end his pilgrim character. Like his father's, Joseph's faith comes out brightly in his death: in giving commandment concerning his bones, he manifested his faith in God's word about the exodus of Israel from Egypt, about the promises of God in regard to the land, and in the God of resurrection. The faith of Moses' parents discerned that their child was fair to God; they therefore hid him, not being afraid of the command of Pharaoh. Moses' faith was manifested when he had reached the height of fame in Egypt. It was then he refused the attractions of the world, and chose to share the afflictions of God's suffering people rather than have sin's temporary pleasure. With his eye on the distant future, the outside place that Christ had was of much greater value to him than Egypt's treasures. But with Moses, faith was not only the substantiating of things hoped for, it was also the conviction of things invisible, therefore he left Egypt and all connected with it, because his eye was on the unseen, living God. The faith evinced in the keeping of the Passover that Israel's firstborn might be preserved, God here attributes to Moses.

Israel's faith comes out in their crossing the Red Sea; the Egyptians, taking this path without faith, find it the way of death. At Jericho, its great and high walls are no barrier to faith: nor is nationality a consideration to Rahab, with whom God and His interests were supreme. Names of renown in the Old Testament shine with the lustre of faith in this divine record; and many, whose names are not recorded have displayed faith in its manifold features and energies. These are not yet made perfect, but shall be, when God, who has given us a very special portion in association with Christ, calls us to our heavenly part.

Hebrews 12:1-29. The great cloud of Old Testament witnesses have exhibited to us the working of faith in the soul; therefore are we exhorted to lay aside everything that would hinder us in the race towards the glory. Weights are doubtless the unnecessary burdens we shoulder connected with things down here; the sin that so easily entangles is unbelief. Endurance is called for, as the race lasts all the time we are here; but the eye is to rest on Jesus, Who has been in the course before us, the Leader, and Who has completed the course. To reach the heavenly goal, the cross lay in the path of the Lord Jesus; but with His eye on what lay ahead, His place at God's right hand. He endured all the judgment of the cross, and despised its shame. Now He has entered into that which was before Him; His is the fulness of joy, and the pleasures for evermore, at God's right hand. And this is our portion after the race is over; the fulness of joy, and the eternal pleasures.

Lest we should become weary of the way, we are to consider well the path of the blessed Lord. He is a wonderful object for us, and a perfect pattern. There are trials in the way, but let us think of what the Son of God had to endure from sinners in His path through this world. Whatever we may have gone through, we have not yet withstood in the conflict of good against evil unto the death. This the Lord Jesus did! It is one aspect of His death. Hebrews 9:1-28; Hebrews 10:1-39 give His vicarious death; here it is His death as a Martyr.

Much of what we have to pass through here is from the hand of the Father in discipline. This purifying work of God we should not despise, nor faint under; for it is the proof of the Father's love. Chastening helps us to endure, and is also the proof of the relationship in which we stand to God as His sons; the absence of it should make us feel that God is not interested in us. Earthly fathers chasten and receive reverence, should we not submit to the wise chastening of God Who desires through it to make us truly enjoy life? His chastening is for real and lasting profit, to make us partake of His holiness; and if there is grief, for chastening is not joyful, it is to bring exercise, which yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. There are therefore four attitudes to chastening here: we may despise it by treating it of no account; we may faint under it as feeling it is too much for us to bear; we may be rebellious and refuse to submit to it; we may be exercised about it and get great gain for our souls.

It is a time for the strengthening of the hands for God's service, and for walking in the right paths of the Lord; for our attitude and actions may have a detrimental or beneficial effect on others. Peace should mark all our steps, but holiness must be with it; and we are to be watchful lest any form of evil affects us. Grace, not law, is ours; the root of bitterness springs from the flesh profanity despises the inheritance. Finding no place for repentance (such a thing did not appeal to him) Esau, having despised the birthright, did not get the blessing. This was God's government.

Christianity is in marked contrast with Judaism. The latter is a tangible system, where all relates to man in the flesh; where there is ever the threat of divine judgment where the truth is not clear, and God remains unrevealed where there is neither rest nor peace for the heart; where man is constantly under judicial command and legal demand; and where man is utterly unable to answer to all required of him. Nor is there relief for the groaning creation under the law; indeed, the beast that came in contact with it shared the judgment of those under it. Even Moses, the man who knew God as no other in that day, confessed his trepidation in the presence of God as the giver of the law. The divine system to which we have come in the faith of our souls is marked by grace. Mount Zion speaks of royal grace, in which we have our part now, and in which Israel shall rejoice under the new covenant. We have also come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, anticipating that great day when the church, the living centre from which God will administer the world to come, reflects the living and divine rays of His heavenly beneficence to the confines of the vast universe. The earthly Jerusalem has been the witness of God's righteous judgments; the heavenly will witness His righteous grace in the display of His glory. Already we can behold the universal gathering of the myriads of angels. These great beings, who have carried out so many missions for God, and are even now SENT FORTH to minister to the heirs of salvation: that mission accomplished, they shall join the great throng in heaven, surrounding the Lamb. We also learn now the privileged place of the church as the "assembly of the firstborn enregistered in heaven." There will be many families in the heavens and on the earth, all named of the Father, but the church has a peculiar place among these families; it has the firstborn's place, the place of peculiar privilege and distinction. As enregistered in heaven we are the freemen of that glorious place; having liberty for praising and worshipping in the nearest possible place to God, ever delighting in Him. So that, if the church as the Heavenly Jerusalem speaks of our place outside in the glory, the church of the firstborn tells of our part within the Father's House. In that world God is the moral governor of the universe, maintaining His rights in the wide creation, ordering the vast scene for His own pleasure. What a contrast to the present time, when God is not acting publicly,

but in mystery. There, the Old Testament saints will have their glorified bodies: the spirits of the just men are thus made perfect. Jesus, who has been the means, through His death, of bringing this wonderful system into existence, retains His precious and sweet Name that we have learned down here. It is the name of Jesus that will fill with fragrance that world to come; it is the blood of Jesus upon which it is founded. Abel's blood cried for vengeance; the blood of Jesus speaks of richest, eternal blessing. This then is the glorious system of divine grace; and it is a very solemn thing to refuse the voice of grace in which God now speaks. Those who carelessly disregarded the words of Sinai came in for judgment; what then shall befall those who refuse the tender accents of grace, spoken by God from heaven. At Sinai, the voice of God shook the earth: but soon God is going to shake the whole universe. All connected with man in the flesh is drawing to a close, its days are numbered; and only what belongs to God in the working of His grace is to remain. In grace we have our part in the Father's heavenly kingdom; so that it becomes us, with thankful hearts, to serve God now with becoming respect and reverential fear; ever remembering that our God is a consuming fire, utterly removing in judgment everything inconsistent with His holy nature.

Hebrews 13:1-25. Brotherly love and hospitality are to mark us, like the saints of old; and we are to have in sympathetic remembrance those suffering for Christ's sake. We are to be marked by purity and the absence of covetousness, relying on God, who will not leave or forsake us, but will ever be our helper.

Those who had formerly led them in right paths, but who were now with Christ, the saints were to remember. They were true leaders, for they brought God's word before them, not the reasonings and thoughts of men. Their conduct was in consonance with their word, therefore were the saints told to consider the issue of their manner of life. Such conduct was produced by a faith that might well be imitated. So that a true leader is marked by a ministry of God's word a walk consistent with the truth, and by living faith in God. But the leaders spoken of had gone, yet Christ remained, the unfailing resource of His saints at all times. Jesus Christ remains ever with us when the godly leaders go: and He is THE SAME yesterday, and today, and for ever. When the true leaders are gone, the enemy endeavours to bring in the various and strange doctrines contrary to the word of God which had been ministered. Therefore are the saints warned against them. Here, Judaizing doctrines were evidently before the apostle's mind; doctrines inconsistent with the truth of grace. The doctrines of the law could bring no profit to a Christian, for they had brought none to the Jew. Moreover Christians have an altar of which they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. The sin offering therefore witnessed a communion in which the Jews, even in their highest class, the priests had no part. But it is in relation to the death of Christ that our communion consists: it is the fellowship of His body and His blood. The blood of the sin offering, on the day of atonement, went into the Holiest, where our communion with God is: we have boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus. The body of this sin offering was burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus, the true sin offering, to set us apart by His blood, suffered, without the gate. Our place is therefore outside with Jesus: outside the system that put Him to death. It is to Him that we go, to bear His reproach. And if we are to be apart from the camp of Judaism, the system of religion for man in the flesh: is it not our privilege and responsibility to be apart from every religion that belongs to man in the flesh, apart from all the sects and systems of Christendom which imitate the Jewish camp? Our city, where our fellowship, our treasures, and our joys are found, is not here, but in the world to come.

While awaiting that abiding city, we are to be marked by the continual sacrificing of praise to God, confessing the Name of Jesus. There are also material sacrifices as well as spiritual; we are to do good and use our substance for meeting the needs of others. Those who lead are to be obeyed, for they are genuinely interested in the well-being of the saints, as having to answer to God for their service. As seeking to walk under God's eye, the writer, evidently Paul, can ask for their prayers: and especially that he might be restored soon to them.

Closing the epistle, the writer invokes the blessing of the God of peace, the God of resurrection, who brought the Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, out from among the dead, in the power of the blood of the ever-lasting covenant. The efficacy of the Lord's work abides eternally: and He gathers in power the sheep of His pasture, as coming out of the domain of death. In the midst of all their distresses the saints can look to the God of peace, the One Who cannot be disturbed by all the evil of the world. He is able to perfect us in the doing of His will through His own working within our hearts. This work within, so pleasing to God, is through Jesus Christ, the true Mediator, to whom glory is ascribed for the ages of ages. Timothy had evidently been imprisoned for Jesus' sake, but was now at liberty: and the writer hoped to see the saints along with Timothy. (This coupling of himself with Timothy is a very strong indication that Paul is the writer). This is the third time that the leaders are mentioned in the chapter; they are to be saluted, and all the saints. Happy are the saints when they have leaders of the character spoken of here; even as in the opening words of the song of Deborah, "For that leaders led in Israel, For that the people willingly offered themselves" (N.T.)

Finally, there is the salutation from those of Italy; saints greeting saints; and the invocation of grace to which God has called us.

Wm. C. Reid. For His, the risen Shepherd's sake, We every blessing pray: With glory let His Name be crowned Through heaven's eternal day!

S. A Prisoner's Testimony to Christ

A Prisoner's Testimony to Christ Ephesians 3:1-21. The testimony of John Baptist to Jesus was unique. He witnessed that Jesus was the Son of God and the Lamb of God, and as a true servant of God said, "He must increase, but I decrease." Yet after this bright witness, he sent two of his disciples from his prison to Jesus, saying, "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" John could not understand why Jesus should exercise His divine power for the good of others and leave him in Herod's prison. It was altogether different with the apostle Paul when imprisoned for Christ's sake. There was indeed a very great difference between them: John had not as Paul the in-dwelling Spirit of God, nor had he the full knowledge of the purpose and counsels of God. In the opening verse of Ephesians 3:1-21, Paul speaks of himself as "the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." He is enabled by divine grace to view his imprisonment in the light of God's will, and not a murmur escapes his lips. It was the same when he first arrived at Rome, and interviewed the chief of the Jews. He was innocent of the charges made against him, and would have been let go, but "when the Jews spake against it" he "was constrained to appeal unto Caesar." But uncomplainingly he at once added, "Not that I had ought to accuse my nation of," and looking at his bonds from the divine side, he can add, "For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:17-20).

While writing his letter to the saints at Ephesus, Paul was actually the prisoner of the emperor at Rome, and was bound with a chain for Christ's sake; but he does not speak of himself in this way. He views himself as Christ's prisoner, and because of those to whom he was writing. It was Christ's will that he should be called apart from what had engaged him in public ministry among the Gentiles, and he willingly submitted to the will of his Master. At Rome, and in the special circumstances chosen by his Lord, the apostle was able to carry out His service in a way he could not otherwise have done. Freed from the exaction of constant and unwearied service to others in preaching and ministering the word, which involved perilous journeys, privations and weariness, the apostle was free to meditate on the great revelations he had received from the Lord, and could put in writing, for the benefit of the saints in that day, as for ours now, that which is found in his remarkable prison epistles. How rich was the grace given to Paul to enable him to take account of himself as Christ's prisoner for the benefit of the Gentile believers. The Mystery of the Christ

Christ filled the vision of the apostle, and it was this that enabled him to view everything, even the trying circumstances in which he was then found, in relation to Him and His will. The ministry of the mystery had been committed to Paul, even if the truth he ministered had also been revealed to Christ's "holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." In this portion of the Scripture he is about to present some of the peculiar features of the mystery relating to the church, but he does not speak of it as the mystery of the church, but rather as the mystery of the Christ. What was the church without Christ? It owed its very existence to Him, and was indeed part of Himself. The apostle views the saints, Jewish and Gentile believers, as being joint-heirs. It was indeed something that had neither been revealed nor hidden in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. They were heirs of an inheritance that belongs to Christ, for everything in the coming day will be under His headship.

The vast inheritance is His as the appointed Heir, as God's anointed Man, and also because He tasted death to procure it. If those who form the church are God's heirs, they are joint-heirs with Christ, owing everything to Him. Our part in the joint-body we also owe to Christ, for we are members of the one body of which Christ is the Head. So that even if the apostle thinks of the part that Jew and Gentile have together in the body, he views it in relation to the Christ. Already, at the close of Ephesians 1:1-23, he had shown the church to be Christ's body, His fulness as filling all in all; in Ephesians 2:1-22 he had spoken of our being reconciled to God in one body, by the cross: now he gives further light on this part of the mystery by showing that the body is a joint-body, composed of both Jewish and Gentile believers.

God's Promise in Christ The third part of the mystery brought out here has to do with the promise of God; but the apostle cannot think of God's promise without thinking of Christ. There were promises made to Abraham and David, and these will assuredly be fulfilled in Christ, even as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 1:20, "For whatever promises of God (there are), in Him is the yea, and in Him the amen, for glory to God by us." The promise spoken of here is not one of the Old Testament promises, but one that is made known in the Gospel.

We are not left to guess what this promise is, for the apostle in his epistle to Titus writes of it in these words, "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2). Again, in 2 Timothy 1:1 the apostle writes of "the promise of life, which is in Christ Jesus." The apostle John also writes of this, saying "And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life" (1 John 2:25). Who would doubt, after reading these scriptures, that eternal life is God's promise in Christ that is set forth in the Gospel?

Eternal life is spoken of in the Old Testament, but although the term is the same, the substance is vastly different. There might indeed be certain features that are the same, but the form and fulness connected with eternal life as made known in the Gospel are vastly different from what is spoken of in the Old Testament. Indeed, John presents eternal life as now possessed in Christ, but Paul looks forward to it in association with Christ in the coming day of glory. But whether viewed now, or in relation to the day of glory, it is God's promise in Christ. The Unsearchable Riches of the Christ

Christ had riches before He came into this world, but in wondrous grace, for our sakes "He became poor," that we through His poverty might become rich. These riches were His in the form of God, riches of glory beyond all human thought; and in this world He was indeed poor, with no place to lay His head; then descending into the depths of poverty on the cross. Coming out of death He has "unsearchable riches"; riches given to Him as Man by His God and Father, but which He has procured by His death.

Solomon inherited amazing riches which David had prepared for the house of Jehovah, "an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand, thousand talents of silver . . . of the gold, the silver, and the brass and the iron, there is no number" (1 Chronicles 22:14; 1 Chronicles 22:16). Then there was the gold, the spices and the precious stones brought by the queen of Sheba, and that flowed in from other sources. These were amazing riches, but they were all the searchable riches of an earthly monarch; and in process of time all were lost. How different are the unsearchable riches of God's heavenly Christ.

All that Christ possesses is His beyond death, riches that are untarnishable, and that can never be lost. The glory of Solomon shone out in his riches; how surpassing bright is the glory of the Christ shining out in His unsearchable riches, not in an earthly kingdom, but from the place He fills at God's right hand. It is from this divine treasury that we are enriched, and it was the privilege of the apostle to preach among the Gentiles Christ's unsearchable riches. Some spread abroad the fame of king Solomon, and the queen of the south heard the report: it is the fame of Him who is greater than Solomon that Paul, and preachers today, tell to men.

God's Purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord

Although the greatest human intellects have studied the creation, men are in utter darkness as to its origin and purpose. The Christian, receiving by faith the word of God, understands "that the worlds were framed by the word of God"; and that God created all things "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Hebrews 11:3. Ephesians 3:9-10).

All that the natural eye can see, and the unregenerate mind contemplate, is the chaos resulting from man's evil and from all his endeavours to put this poor world right. No doubt the great intelligences of heaven are aware of all that man is doing, and of the conditions that are beyond his wisdom to control. But they also see what God is doing, and in the church, which He has formed, they behold a character of divine wisdom that was never before displayed. This all-varied wisdom of God was not made known in His ways of old: He reserved it for the time of Christ's entry into His glory, and for the days of His new-creation workmanship in the church. This wonderful display of divine wisdom was in the mind of God before time began, and is "according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Christ is the centre of God's purpose; nothing of it could have been accomplished apart from Him and His great work on the cross. God had Christ in reserve from eternity to give effect to all that lay in His heart and mind, and having wrought out on the cross the great work of redemption, the basis for the carrying out of all His will, God has glorified Him at His right hand, and is working out all His pleasure in relation to Him. The Christ Dwelling in the Heart

It must be very evident that if Christ so filled the vision of His prisoner, He was dwelling in his heart. How very suitable then for him to express the desire in prayer to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that Christ might dwell in the hearts of His own by faith. If Christ dwells in our hearts He will control every inward spring of our moral being, and thus give tone and character to all our thoughts, words and actions. Our lives will be lived for Christ who is enthroned in the seat of the affections. To this end the apostle first desired that the Father would grant "according to the riches of His glory," to strengthen His saints "with might by His Spirit in the inner man." How blessedly have the riches of the Father's glory been evinced in relation to the truth of the mystery, by enriching those He has associated with His own dear Son. What a wonderful place of favour and blessing is ours! far transcending all we could have imagined. The work of the Spirit is to strengthen us with might in the inner man, and this He does by engaging us with Christ and working every divine impression thus received into the texture of our moral being. The Christ as brought before us in our Scripture is viewed in relation to the wide sphere of His interests and glory, and God would have us engaged with Him in this way. We view Him in all His Personal beauty and perfections, and see Him as the Man of God's counsels at the centre of all that God

has brought under Him.

Whatever is enthroned in the seat of the affections will govern all our thoughts and feelings, and give strength and character to every inward spring and outward action of our lives. Is it Christ that dwells in our hearts? Is Christ Personally, and in the wide range of His interests, paramount with us at all times? Is everything in our lives subservient to Him and His will? Do we refer every action to Him, deciding each detail of our lives by the way it will be viewed by Christ and as to how it will affect His interests?

Faith, too, has its place in this most important work of the Spirit of God, for the Christ is to dwell in the heart "by faith." God would ever direct the eye to Christ, and give us to know that every subjective result is obtained in occupation with Him. Nor is it a fleeting glance at Christ, now and again, that will give Him a dwelling place in the heart. It is the habit of the soul in turning instinctively to Christ at all times that proves that He dwells in the heart. How true this was of "The prisoner of Jesus Christ"; of him who could say, "To me to live is Christ." The Love of Christ Which Passeth Knowledge

Christ dwelling in the heart by faith enables us to take our place in spirit with all the saints, and to view with them the breadth and length and depth and height of the sphere that is filled with the riches of the Father's glory, the unsearchable riches of the Christ, and with all that the church shares with Christ according to the eternal purpose of God. We never could have had part with Christ in all that fills this glorious scene apart from His great love for us. His love brought Him down to where we were to lift us up to where He is: it is truly a love that passeth knowledge. In Ephesians 5:1-33 of this epistle the apostle tells us more of this knowledge-surpassing love. He knew and enjoyed Christ's love for himself, even as he wrote to the Galatians, "The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me": but at the beginning of Ephesians 5:1-33 he writes, "Christ loved us, and delivered Himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." In the giving of Himself to secure the Father's will and pleasure, as depicted in the burnt offering, the Lord Jesus expressed His love for His saints. We are accepted before God in all the fragrance, efficacy and value of the perfect offering in which God was glorified, and that expressed the unfathomable love of the heart of Christ. That wonderful love surpasses our knowledge, but the One to whom the sacrifice was made can fully and perfectly enter into the infinite value of the offering, and into the intrinsic worth of the love that caused His Son to enter into death. This knowledge-surpassing love is again brought before us in the same chapter, where it is written, "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it." How Paul delighted to speak of Christ's love! What Christ gave measures His wondrous love. First, He gave up His glory and came to earth; then He gave up all that pertained to Him as Son of David; and having given up all He possessed, He then gave Himself; and more He could not give. The more we ponder that precious death in which He gave Himself, the more our poor hearts will know of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

God's Eternal Glory in Christ

Soon man's day will be over, the day that has shown what a wonderful creature has come from the hand of God, but that has also displayed the enormity of his wickedness and guilt in sin against God. Christ's day is assuredly coming, when God will give His answer to the cross in displaying His glory in Christ before the vast universe. After the Millennium has run its course, the day of

God, the day of eternity will dawn, and God's glory will be found "in the church in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages." The assembly is a new creation vessel, the fruit of God's sovereign love and infinite wisdom; the crown of His workmanship and skill; and suited to His eternal glory. This wondrous vessel could never have existed apart from Christ; it is "the assembly in Christ Jesus." It belongs to Him, and is part of Him. Just as Eve was derived from Adam and united to him, so the church has been taken from Christ, and will soon be presented to Him as His bride. In Revelation 21:1-27, the church is viewed as the city of God, with no need "of the sun nor of the moon . . . for the glory of God has enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb." The light is found in the city, the light of the divine glory, but the light comes from the Lamb who is the Lamp. All the glory centres in His blessed Person. So it is with the eternal glory; it is in the church, but it all centres in Christ Jesus.

What a glorious testimony to Christ is this! With such a Person before his eye, filling the vision of his soul, and dwelling in his heart, was it any wonder that Paul gloried in his bonds for Christ's sake? and took account of himself as "The prisoner of Jesus Christ."

Wm. C. Reid.

S. A Rod out of Jesse

A Rod out of Jesse The prophet Isaiah writes much of Christ, foretelling details of His life on earth as Jehovah's Servant, His rejection by His people Israel, His sufferings at the hands of men, His atoning suffering from God, and His coming glory as the Messiah. In Isaiah 9:6 he writes of the holy Child that would be born to bring blessing to His people, of the Son that God would give to rule in righteousness, One whose personal greatness and divine glories are revealed in His Name, "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." In Isaiah 11:1-16 the prophet presents the same blessed Person as a scion of the royal line, come from Jesse, a Branch whose precious fruits would bring pleasure to the heart of Jehovah.

There are different presentations of Christ as the anointed Man in Isaiah. Apart from the mention in Isaiah 11:1-16, which we shall particularly consider, there is the opening verse of Isaiah 42:1-25, which reads, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." This is quoted in Matthew 12:18-21. Then there is the opening verse of Isaiah 61:1-11, which the Lord Himself reads in the synagogue at Nazareth, and of which He says, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:16-22). The Spirit of the Lord Shall Rest upon Him

Although a divine Person, Messiah would be truly Man, and as Jehovah's Servant, "The Spirit of Jehovah" would rest upon Him as the evidence of God's pleasure in Him, and to carry out His will. This Scripture, Isaiah 11:2, is fulfilled in the Lord's coming to earth, and, as recorded in John 1:32, "John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him." Like Noah's dove, which alighted on the ark, the only suitable resting place for the Spirit of God in this world was on Jesus, the holy Son of God. This Scripture has sometimes been spoken of as "The seven Spirits of the Lord." In Revelation 1:4 we read of "The seven Spirits which are before His throne"; and the seven Spirits are also referred to in Revelation 3:1-22, Revelation 4:1-11 and Revelation 5:1-14. The Spirit of God in His divine fulness in relation to the ways of God is seen in the seven Spirits; but in Christianity, where divine unity is emphasised, we read of "One Spirit," and the "unity of the Spirit," and of the fruit of the Spirit in its rich variety.

If we view this Scripture in the light of the seven Spirits, the first, the Spirit of Jehovah, presents the Holy Spirit personally; and we see in Jesus here on earth the fulness of the Godhead, the three Persons of the Trinity active for the blessing of mankind. The Son was here in Person, the Father was present in Him in testimony, and the Spirit was upon Him in power. All are united and active for the carrying out of the counsels of the Godhead. The Spirit is then presented in three couplets, the first of which is "The Spirit of wisdom and understanding"; the second, "The Spirit of counsel and might"; and the third, "The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." The Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding

It is noteworthy that although the divine traits of wisdom and understanding belong to the Holy Spirit as the anointing, they also marked the Lord Jesus as the "fine flour mingled with oil" (Leviticus 2:4-5); that is as the "holy thing" born of the Virgin, under the power of the Holy Spirit

(Luke 1:35). In Luke 2:40 it is written, "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." A few verses later, telling of Jesus at the age of twelve, He is "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." These were traits of His divine nature, but the Spirit that rested upon Him was the power for their manifestation in His public ministry.

Every step, every word and every action of the Lord Jesus was marked by the Spirit of wisdom and understanding; but there were occasions when these precious features were manifest to all, as when the spies of the chief priests and scribes sought to entangle Him with the question, "Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?" (Luke 20:22); and when the crafty Sadducees posed their question about the resurrection of the dead. The Spirit of understanding is seen in His discerning the thoughts and motives of His questioners, and the Spirit of wisdom in His replies that silenced them. Those who received the answer concerning the tribute " marvelled at His answer, and held their peace"; the multitude that heard Him silence the Sadducees "were astonished at His doctrine" (Matthew 22:33).

He understood all that was passing through the critical heart of Simon the Pharisee, who had bidden Him to eat with him, but who had denied Him the elementary courtesies due to a friend, much less than to the Son of God (Luke 7:39); but He also understood, as Simon could not, the heart of a repentant sinner. He not only had the Spirit of wisdom, He was Wisdom, and one of Wisdom's children had come uninvited into the house of Simon to do Him homage, and to make known her thankfulness for His heavenly grace. The Spirit of Counsel and Might The Spirit of this second couplet was specially manifested in the teaching and works of power of Jehovah's Servant. In Matthew 5:1-48; Matthew 6:1-34; Matthew 7:1-29 the Spirit of counsel is revealed in the teachings of the kingdom, while Matthew 8:1-34; Matthew 9:1-38 demonstrate the power of the kingdom in Him who had the Spirit of might.

After pronouncing the blessings of the kingdom in Matthew 5:1-48, and having given various exhortations and warnings, the Lord Jesus says six times over, "But I say unto you." The Spirit of counsel in Him amplified, modified or replaced by His own teaching what had been said by them of "old time." He counsels that the spirit of grace, the nature of their Father, is to be manifest in His children, and not the vindictive spirit of the law. His counsel to Israel in the first of the six pronouncements is, "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him . . ." (Matthew 5:21-26); and in the last of the six, His counsel to the Christian is, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:43-48). In all the teaching of the Lord, how blessedly does the Spirit of counsel rejoice the hearts of those who know Him.

Each of the four Gospels brings out the Spirit of might in the Lord. There were outstanding miracles, as when Jesus cleansed the leper, opened the eyes of the blind, made the deaf hear, and raised the dead. Then there were the miracles when numbers were involved as when He on two occasions fed the multitudes with loaves and fishes and when the ten lepers were cleansed. There were also times when, as in Matthew 8:16, "they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick." As

we contemplate these and other times when the Spirit of might was manifest in Jesus, the words of the Apostle John come to mind, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:1-25). The Spirit of Knowledge and of the Fear of the Lord

How blessedly do we see the Spirit in this character in Jesus when He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. The Spirit of knowledge is evinced in His selection and quotation of the appropriate Scriptures to meet each temptation; and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord is manifest in His referring each temptation to what God had said. He lived by every word that proceeded "out of the mouth of God"; He would "not tempt the Lord" His God: and refused to worship Satan on the ground of what had been written, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." His every step was taken in the knowledge of His Father's will, and in reverential fear that delights in God. Every trial and sorrow that lay before Him He knew perfectly, yet He took His way to the cross with undeviating step to accomplish the great work God had given Him to do.

Christ's delight was constantly "in the fear of the Lord," the reverential fear that seeks to please God in all things, as knowing Him, and as sustained by Him. Having Jehovah's Spirit there was no need for Him to judge of things by what He saw or heard, for He knew by the Spirit the thoughts and feelings of every heart. The perfection of Christ's Manhood is manifested by His reliance upon the Spirit of God in every circumstance. The prophet then looks forward to the day when Christ shall reign, when He will care for the poor and the meek, and deal with the wicked. In that day, "Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins." The conditions of life on earth will undergo a radical change, for the glory of God and for the blessing of men, for "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Christians, who have been called out from the nations in this the day of God's grace, will not have their part in the earthly blessings of the coming day: their portion is in heaven in nearness to Christ, sharing the vast inheritance as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Even now we share in Christ's anointing, as knowing that He is "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows."

Wm. C. Reid.

S. A Word on Knowledge

A Word on Knowledge

We are living in days when knowledge is very readily acquired by those disposed to learn, particularly in Christendom, where almost every normal child is literate, and where literature abounds. For those desiring the knowledge of God and His things there is the priceless heritage of an open Bible, and very many excellent writings from the pens of able and spiritual men, who have endeavoured to bring the truth of God to bear on the hearts and consciences of their readers. Such men have sought to bring conviction of sin to sinners, and to instruct believers in the foundations of the faith and in the truth of the counsels of God.

Knowledge Puffs Up The acquisition of knowledge however has its dangers, as Paul showed in 1 Corinthians 8:1, where he writes, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." When the truth of God is only held in the intellect, and has not affected the heart and conscience, there is the danger of inflation. If, however, the truth enters into the heart, touching the affections and the conscience, there will be edification instead of inflation.

Every exercised Christian, into whose heart the truth has entered, will at once agree with the words of 1 Corinthians 8:2, "If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." These are salutary words rebuking the unexercised and vain, and which humble the saint who feels that any little knowledge he has procured through learning but manifests to him that there is a vast field of divine knowledge into which his soul has hardly entered. The Knowledge of the Father

Coming into the world, the Son of God brought with Him a knowledge that had not been here before. In Matthew 11:1-30, He says, "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27). This was the most wonderful knowledge to have come before men; but it was hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes (Matthew 11:25). It was not a revelation for the intellect of man, but for the hearts of those in whom God, in His grace, had wrought, babes in His family, but also despised by the learned of this world as uninstructed in the things of a vain world. This wondrous knowledge of the Father was not reserved for the disciples of the Lord's day on earth alone, nor yet for the most advanced in the family of God, for the Apostle John wrote, "I write unto you little children, because ye have known the Father" (1 John 2:13). The veriest babe in God's family has the divine nature, who in believing the Gospel was indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and thus had the capacity and power for the reception of the knowledge of the Father. The knowledge of God as Father is the light in which all His children walk, and those who have not this knowledge walk in darkness. The Knowledge of the Son of God From Matthew 11:27, where the Lord says, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father," it is plain that the Son in the glory of His Person as also in the manner in which Godhead and Manhood are united in Him, is inscrutable. Yet, Paul wrote, "That I may know Him" (Php 3:10). From this we learn that there is a knowledge of the Son of God that is to be acquired; and the apostle shows us in this same chapter how he sought to obtain it. The "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus"

his Lord so captivated his heart that he let everything go that hindered his acquiring it. The things that had been gain to him, he counted loss for Christ. All that he had sought after in Judaism, shining trophies for a religious Jew, he had given up for that which dimmed their lustre, the knowledge of the One who appeared to him on the Damascus road. There was nothing now in the whole of man's world that had any attraction for Paul's heart, for he counted all that he ever had, or all that man could possibly offer him, to be loss, yea, to be filth, something to be rid of, so that he might have that which had the most powerful influence over his soul, the knowledge of the Son of God in heaven.

What Paul desired, the knowledge of the Son of God, is open for every believer in the Lord Jesus; and our heavenly Head has given gifts to men for the express purpose of our arriving at "the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:13). This is a very wide range of knowledge, for it brings before us all that is presented to us in the Scriptures of Jesus, and in a special way the place that He now fills as Man in the presence of God, the object of His pleasure, and the centre of all His counsels. Nor is it the glories of the Son of God alone that we are to seek to know, that which He now has at God's right hand, and the glories in which He shall be displayed in a coming day: but the apostle prayed for the saints at Ephesus that they might "know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge" (Ephesians 3:19). As knowing this wonderful, knowledge-surpassing love, we shall be able to hold aright in our hearts all that we learn of the glories of the blessed Son of God.

Growth by Knowledge In Paul's prayer for the saints at Colosse, he desired that they "might be filled with the knowledge of" God's will "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Colossians 1:9). How good it is when all our own desires, and those of others, are set aside by God's will having its true place in our hearts and minds. The knowledge of God's will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, will effectuate this, and remove all tendencies to inflation. Such knowledge will produce results that will bring glory to God, for then we shall "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing (or growing) by the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10). So that where there is divine wisdom and understanding, the knowledge of God's will in the heart will bring among other blessed results, the growth of the soul in the knowledge of God. God desires that all His saints should grow, for with the spiritual growth in the knowledge of Himself, there will be increased capacity for fruit-bearing, which is pleasurable for the Father and the Son (John 15:8). The State Necessary for Knowledge

What we have seen regarding Paul in Php 3:1-21, and in his prayer in Colossians 1:1-29, makes it clear that if we are to really know the truth of God, there must be a proper spiritual state to receive it. This is plainly shown in Ephesians 1:17, where, after having written of the blessings of the saints, according to the eternal counsels of God, the Apostle prays that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." The spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God is the state of soul necessary to enter in truth into the knowledge of God as brought before us in the counsels of His grace. Without this spirit of wisdom and revelation, that affinity within the soul with what is presented in the divine teaching, there cannot be the true knowledge of God in relation to "the hope of His calling . . . the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints . . . and the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe" (Ephesians 1:18-19). Where saints of God are engrossed with the things of the earth, or occupied with the world, there is not a right spirit within them, not

that "spirit of wisdom and revelation" that values or seeks the precious truths, so dear to the heart of God, secrets of His bosom, that He delights to make known to His saints. If we are engaged with the passing things of time, it is hardly likely that we shall have the desire for, or the spiritual state to acquire, the things that belong to heaven and the coming day.

Paul's prayer in Php 1:1-30 is that the love of the saints "may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment" (Php 1:9). The abounding love of the saints will be regulated aright where there is divine knowledge and intelligence. There is a time for love to be restrained, as is indicated in Revelation 1:13, where the Lord is seen "girt about the paps with a golden girdle ": but when there is no restraining condition, the affections are free to flow out, but under the direction of the knowledge of God, and the divine intelligence communion with Him gives.

What Divine Knowledge Brings

Divine knowledge brings to us the things of the Father, which He has "hid from the wise and the prudent" (Matthew 11:25): all the things that the Son had received, and given to His friends (John 15:15). Besides, there are all the precious truths revealed by "the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," which angels would fain look into (1 Peter 1:12). In his second epistle, the Apostle Peter writes, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord" (2 Peter 1:2). As believers, we stand in grace before God; we could never have stood in His presence on the ground of works of righteousness: but we also need grace to sustain us throughout our earthly sojourn, with the peace of God, and the peace of Christ filling the heart. The more we know of the God of all grace, and of our Lord Jesus who sits upon the throne of grace, the more shall we drink of the resources of grace available for us, and the more shall we enjoy divine peace, whatever our circumstances may be. The next verse reads. "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us by glory and virtue." All that is needful for the saints of God to sustain the divine life that He has communicated to us, so that we might live for His glory in passing through this world, has been given to us by His divine power: but it can only be laid hold of as we enter into the knowledge of God. As we learn that God has called us by glory and virtue, so do we enter into the knowledge of Him in this way, and thereby lay hold of the resources of His divine power that will enable us to live for Himself in this world. From what we have considered it will be evident that to rightly acquire divine knowledge we have to be in communion with our God and Father, and with His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; and this communion will give us the sense of our own nothingness, and so keep us from being puffed up by the wonderful things learned in the presence of God. Even the great Apostle to the Gentiles was liable to be "exalted above measure," because of the wonderful things he had heard in heaven; but the Lord gave him a thorn for his flesh that he might learn the sufficiency of His grace.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. All Things in the Hand of the Son

All Things in the Hand of the Son

How very wonderful it is that God has revealed Himself to us in the Person of the Son, and has also given us His thoughts of His well-Beloved. In the types of the Old Testament there are beautiful foreshadowings of the relationships and features of the Son of God, but all the types, precious as they are, are but dim shadows of the substance found in Christ. Isaac was a type of the Lord Jesus as the only-begotten Son, as when God said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only Isaac, whom thou lovest" (Genesis 22:2). Of Isaac, Abraham's servant said, "Unto him hath he (his father) given all that he hath" (Genesis 24:36); a lovely foreshadowing of John 3:35, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand." The Father's love for the Son is expressed in what He has given to Him, and its measure is the "all things" that He has given into His hand. Nothing has been withheld, for the Son could say to His disciples, "All things that the Father hath are mine" (John 16:15). How delightful it must have been for the Son to have everything that belonged to the Father entrusted to His keeping. Everything belonged to the Son in the unity of the Godhead with the Father, but as Man the Father had entrusted all His interests to the Son, for the Son had come into the world, not to do His own will, but the will of the Father who had sent Him. Everything that the Father had purposed was given to the Son to fulfil, and all the resources of the Father had been given to the Son to carry out His will.

All things had been created by the Son (John 1:3); all things were His both as creator and as one with the Father; but as Man all things were given into His hand, all things were shown to Him (John 5:20), and He had heard all things from the Father (John 15:15). In Hebrews 2:8 we read of all things being put under the feet of Jesus as Son of Man, and as the Man of God's counsels, in Ephesians 1:1-23, all things are not only under His feet, but under His headship. In these we learn of the glory of the Person of the Son, of the Father's pleasure in Him, of God's thoughts of Man in Christ, and of God's delight in what Christ has done to secure His glory.

Solomon, like Isaac and others, was a type of the Lord Jesus as Son of God. In Hebrews 1:1-14 there is a quotation from 1 Chronicles 22:1-19, where God says to David concerning Solomon, "He shall be my son, and I his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever" (1 Chronicles 22:10). Only in Christ could this promise be completely fulfilled, as is seen in Psalms 2:1-12, when the Lord Jesus is viewed as God's anointed, and God's King. It was no doubt the knowledge of this Psalm that brought from Nathaniel the confession, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel"; and from Martha, "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." While not reaching to the height of His glory as the only-begotten Son of the Father's bosom, this Scripture shows that the kingdom of Israel belonged to the Son. In Psalms 2:1-12 Jehovah says, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." On earth, the Lord Jesus refused the kingdoms of the world from the hand of Satan, and in John 6:15 He refused Israel's throne from the hands of men; but He will yet receive

the kingdom of Israel, and all the kingdoms of the world from the hand of His Father, as belonging to the "all things" given into His hand.

Although all things were put into His hand by the Father, the Son would not act independently of Him. Such was the nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son that Jesus said, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do; for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19). It is absolutely impossible for the Son to act independently of the Father, because of their unity in the fulness of the Godhead, and because of their eternal bond of affection.

If the Father's love for the Son had been expressed in giving all things into His hand, it was also expressed in showing "Him all things that Himself doeth." All the mighty works of power wrought by the Son were received from His Father, even as He said, "For the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me" (John 5:20; John 5:36).

Every work of power, wrought by the Son, was for the glory of God, and to accomplish His Father's will. Before He fed the multitude with loaves and fishes, He gave thanks, manifesting that He was not acting in independence of His Father, even if all things were in His hand. It was the same at the grave of Lazarus: though acting in every detail for the Father's glory, and in the consciousness of all that the Father had given Him, before He raised Lazarus, "Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me; and I knew that Thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me" (John 6:11; John 11:41-42). The raising of Lazarus was one of the "greater works" to which the Lord referred in John 5:20. Raising the dead and quickening them belonged to the Father, but "The Son quickeneth whom He will." This divine power belonged to the Son inherently, but as come into Manhood He received all as Man from the hand of the Father, so that He might give effect to the Father's will, in all things, as the Sent One of the Father. All was done with reference to the Father: if He quickens whom He will, it is because He has no other will than the Father's. Yet this very obedience in all things, and His inability to act independently of the Father was the proof that He was a divine Person in Manhood. Not only while on earth was all in the hand of the Son, but when the time for judgment comes it will be found that "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Men have taken the occasion of the Son's coming into manhood to deny His divine glory, but the Father has answered this in decreeing that the Son will be the judge of all; He "hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man." As the Word, it is written of the Son, "In Him was life" (John 1:4). Life is in the Son intrinsically because He is God; nor did it cease to be in Him thus when He became Man, but, having come into Manhood, He could say, "As the Father has life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." Life was given to Him as Man that He might carry out all that the Father had given into His hand. The Father in the Son sought those who should worship Him in spirit and in truth. Only in the life received from the Son of God could men truly worship God. Was not this procuring of worshippers for the Father one of the all things given into the hand of the Son? The worshippers of the Father are also the sheep of whom the Son said, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). All that the Father has given into the hand of the Son is secure, whether His sheep, or things relating to His path on earth or belonging to His present session on high.

Resurrection is also in the hand of the Son, for the day is coming "in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." The Father has entrusted a great work to the Son, and He will complete it to His entire satisfaction. When His works on earth had been completed He could say to the Father, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do"; and on the cross He said, "It is finished." Soon He will come to finish the work necessary to bring in the millennium, then complete all that will introduce the eternal state. In John 6:37-40 we learn of what is in the hand of the Son. Verse 37 speaks of the things that shall come to Him, for the word "all" is neuter, but it also tells of the persons that come. All the things given into the hand of the Son will assuredly come to Him. When He was here, it might appear as if all were not in His hand; but all would assuredly be His, nothing would be lost, and all would be raised up in the last day. Not only would Israel's throne be His, but also all the kingdoms of this world. He will soon be manifested as having authority over all flesh, with life, judgment and resurrection power in His hand.

Those who will share the glory of the Son have a special word in John 6:40, "For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son, and believes on Him, should have life eternal; and I will raise Him up at the last day." How wonderful are the blessings given to those who perceive in Jesus the Son of God, and who believe in Him. Even while awaiting the resurrection morning they have life eternal, the life in which we enjoy communion with the Father and the Son, and so foretaste something of the joys of the coming day. But our full portion will be with Christ in the last day, the day when He shall manifestly possess all things given into His hand by the Father. The disciples were not only secure in the hand of the Son, they were loved by Him, and "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). In love the Lord was preparing the disciples for the time of His absence from them, and "knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands" He stooped to wash the disciples feet, taking into the hands that held "all things" the way-worn feet of those He loved. His hand sufficed to hold "all things," among them His sheep in perfect security, but when He stooped in love to care for His disciples, we read of His hands.

It was the desire of the Father and the Son to bring the disciples into nearness and intimacy with them, therefore did Jesus say, "I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). Again, in chapter John 17:7-8, the Lord said, "Now they have known that all things that Thou hast given me are of Thee; for the words which Thou hast given me I have given them, and they have received them, and have known truly that I came out from Thee, and have believed that Thou sentest me." What words are these that were spoken by the Son! They contain the revelation of God, and of all that the Father has given to the Son, and their reception by the disciples gives divine certainty to the soul as to the origin of all that is found in the Son.

Everything is in the hand of the Son in His present place at the Father's right hand, and the Holy Spirit has come to bear witness concerning it, even as Jesus said, "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." Even as Abraham's servant brought from the treasury of Isaac "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and . . . precious things" (Genesis 24:53), so the Holy Spirit has come from where the True Isaac is, to show to us all the things that the Father has given into His hand.

It is not only in John's Gospel that we learn of all things being given to the Son, for, as recorded in Matthew 11:1-30, when Israel's door was closed against the Lord, He answered, "I thank Thee, O Father . . . All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." It was a small thing that He should be given the work of restoring Israel to Jehovah; something far greater was committed to Him by the Father; He was to have a kingdom embracing all the kingdoms of the world, and for this all things had been delivered to Him of His Father.

Now, on high, with "authority over all flesh," the Son is communicating eternal life to all that the Father has given to Him, but soon He will exercise authority publicly before the whole universe, and will subdue "all things" before delivering up the kingdom "to God, even the Father . . . that God may be all in all." In this day, while the Son of God is still rejected by Israel, and by the world, the saints have been brought into the divine secret that "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand": and it is our delight to ponder all that God has revealed to us of this wonderful secret; but the time is drawing nigh when there will be the display of the glory of the Father in the Person of the Son, and then the world will know that the One they rejected is none other than the Son of God, the creator of all things, and the Man into whose hands the Father committed all things.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. An Outline of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

An Outline of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

(The substances of Bible Readings held at Thropton with Wm. C. Reid.) Ephesians 1:1-23. This precious epistle opens out for us the highest Christian blessings and privileges, unfolding the relationships into which the blessed God has brought us with Himself, and our associations in nearness to the Lord Jesus Christ. All that God has given to us in the riches of His grace is in Christ, and is the fruit of his counsels of sovereign love, which have been secured by the death of Jesus.

Having stated his apostleship, his authority for writing to them, Paul addresses the brethren at Ephesus as the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus. They were saints by the calling of God, and faithful as answering to the divine call. Because of their unfaithfulness, the Galatians and Corinthians could not be so addressed. With the invocation of grace and peace, the Christian revelation is stated, as in all the epistles bearing Paul's name, that God is Father, and Jesus Christ is Lord.

Breaking forth in praise by the Spirit, Paul speaks of the double relationship of the Lord Jesus to God the Father: as Man He is related to God, and as Son He is in relationship with the Father. According to this double relationship, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Israel's blessings were earthly, material and temporal, in association with an earthly Messiah; ours are heavenly, spiritual, and eternal, in association with the heavenly Christ. Our calling, being heavenly, belongs to a system of divine love and glory existing, in God's counsels, before the foundation of the world; and the God of our Lord Jesus Christ chose us in Him, that we might live in the knowledge and joy of His love before His face. For this we must be like God Himself, holy and blameless; and this could only be our portion in Christ, as the fruit of God's own work. Moreover, the Father desired that our enjoyment of His love might be in a relationship of nearness and intimacy; so He marked us out beforehand to share His Son's place in the consciousness of that same relationship. Sonship, the nearest possible relationship to God, the highest Christian blessing, is ours, through and along with God's blessed Son; not by our seeking or choosing, but by God's eternal counsels, according to the good pleasure of His will. Not on account of anything that we are naturally, have we been brought so near to God and the Father, into the most wonderful blessings, which far surpass the loftiest thoughts or imagination of man; all originated in the heart and mind of God, and comes from Him in infinite love and kindness, for the satisfaction and delight of His heart. Indeed, these blessings come to us in spite of what we are, being entirely the fruit of God's counsels, in which the glory of His grace is praised by the display of infinite kindness. This grace also introduces us into God's favour in its fulness and perfection, as seen in Christ His Beloved. We learn what that place is as we see what Christ is to God, and as we realise that His place is ours, for we are there in association with Him. In all that we have considered, God has been manifesting His own thoughts, not in reference to what we are down here as derived from Adam, not as looking upon our natural state in the flesh or our

character as poor failing mortals: He has been telling us of His counsels of love that existed before we had any being. Now we are to see that God has also taken account of our ruin and guilt, and has met our deep poverty in the riches of His grace. And it is in the Beloved, in whom we have been taken into God's favour, that we have redemption, through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. All the efficacy of the great work wrought out on the cross abides in the Person of the Christ, who did the work, where He now is at the right hand of God. Is it not wonderful to think that the same grace which forgave us our sins has abounded to us in enlightening us with the knowledge of the mystery of His will? What a God is our God! He desires that we might know His great thoughts for the glory of His Son. What wisdom and intelligence God has manifested in making such communications! He raises us from the lowest pit to take us into the most precious secrets of His great heart of love. Such a course would not be considered wise or intelligent by the mighty men of the world, but God's thoughts are altogether different from man's, and human wisdom and intelligence are foolishness when viewed in the light of what is divine. And what a mystery it is! To gratify His heart of love, to give Himself pleasure, God has purposed to set Christ, His Own dear Son, as the Head and centre of a universe filled with glory and blessing. This was in the mind of God long before Adam was put into Eden; God purposed it in Himself; and nothing that has happened or will yet take place, during the ages of time, will frustrate or in the least possible degree hinder the accomplishment of the purpose of God. Throughout the past ages, from the days of Adam, man has been displaying himself in all the iniquity, rebellion, corruption, and falsehood of his fallen nature, and as influenced by the powers of darkness; but in the coming ages God is going to display what He is in Christ, in all the moral beauties and perfections of His holy nature, and in all the grace and love of His heart of infinite love. To this end God has enthroned His dear Son, according to His counsels, that as Head, He might fill every sphere of authority and government in the wide universe, to direct, control, energise and sustain the whole scene, for the glory of the Father, and for the blessing of every family named by the Father in that day. But the glory of God is not to be praised in His Son alone; according to the same purpose that has set Christ as Man in His exalted and glorious position, we have obtained as associated with Christ, as blessed in Him, an inheritance. This is no afterthought with God; He marked us out beforehand for this portion; and as regards the present moment, He works all things after the counsel of His own will. Nothing in the present course of things can turn God from His purpose; rather He makes everything subserve His purpose. The counsels of God's will effectuate the purpose of God; even the giving up of Jesus was "By the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Israel's rejection of their Messiah is turned to account by God, in the great wisdom displayed in His counsels, for now He secures a believing remnant from Israel, which trusts in Christ before the nation turns to Him in repentance; and this remnant has part with Christ in His heavenly glory in the coming day, and is for the praise of God's glory. But this company, sharing Christ's heavenly glory, is not only from Israel; it embraces the Gentiles who now believe the Gospel sent from God. This is the Gospel of our salvation, which presents God to us in all the grace of His heart; which tells of the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Jesus, and of the righteousness in which we are before God through the death and resurrection of His Son.

Having believed the Gospel, God has claimed us for Him-self by sealing us with His Holy Spirit. As in the type of the cleansing of the leper, the blood was first put upon the ear, then the oil was "put upon the place of the blood" (Leviticus 14:28). The same Spirit that claims us for God, and thus marks us for obtaining part with Christ in the coming inheritance, is the One by whom we are given

to anticipate the joys and blessedness of our future portion, for He is the earnest of the inheritance. Already acquired by the death of the Lord Jesus, the inheritance will, at His coming, be redeemed by His divine power. At that day, those from among the Gentiles, who have now trusted in Christ by the Gospel, will be for the praise of the glory of God along with the pre-trusting remnant of Israel. How surpassing wonderful that God's glory is going to be praised in men! A marvellous vessel, God's own workmanship in new creation, composed of those who once were sinners far from Him, called from among Jew and Gentile, will shine forth in all the living glory of God, a glory that will be praised in the whole vast creation. Surely in the presence of such grace, that has given us part in this glory, our hearts bow in wonder and worship

After revealing the purpose and counsels of God, which bring to us the good pleasure of God's will, the mystery of His will, and the counsel of His will, in which Christ's pre-eminent place is secured, as also the blessing of those brought into association with Christ, the apostle prays for the saints. He desires that the saints of God should enter into the knowledge of what God has so graciously made known to them. With confidence he can thus pray for them, because their lives had manifested the fundamental marks of the Christian, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and love to all the saints. Alas! only too often had he to write to the saints about different forms of evil, which God allowed to come out, that we might have in the inspired page His mind regarding them; but here the saints have a testimony regarding their walk which the apostle can speak of with pleasure, and God enables him to unfold to them the deep secrets of His heart. The prayer in this chapter is addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, while that in Ephesians 3:1-21 is to the Father; these answering to the double relationship, already noticed, in which the Lord Jesus stands to God as Man and to the Father as Son. The former relates to objective matters; the latter being mainly subjective. All the glory of which we have read, the glory that already shines in the face of Jesus, and which shall be displayed in Him and in those associated with Him, has its origin in the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. All proceeds from God and all shall return to God; even as we see all the glory emanating here from the Father of Glory, and returning to God the Father at the close of Ephesians 3:1-21, where we read, "To Him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages."

Paul first desires that the Father of glory would give the saints the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him. This belongs to the spiritual state necessary for the reception of the divine communications vouchsafed. It is altogether impossible to apprehend the wisdom and intelligence in which God has abounded to us in the revelation of the mystery of His will apart from having this spirit of wisdom; nor can we truly enter into the blessed revelation that God has made of Himself in His wonderful purpose unless we have the spirit of revelation. This spirit is surely the spiritual affinity, produced within us through communion with God in regard to the communications He has made. We are often content to go on in a low spiritual state in which we cannot enter into God's highest thoughts for us; and the precious things pertaining to the full knowledge of God lie unexplored and unknown. Our knowledge of God largely depends on the character of our communion with Him. Most pray to God for their needs, and about their troubles; others will also pray for the prosperity of the Gospel, and it may be for the whole field of God's interests in the world; but how few comparatively go to God to speak with Him about His purpose and the glory of His Son. It is this last that will give us from God the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him. Depend upon it, if we are absorbed with present things, even if it be with things

that are right in themselves, we are not likely to be much concerned with God's purpose, and the great wealth of blessing which is ours because of it. It is not that we may not know the terms of the full know-ledge of God as revealed in these preceding verses; the eyes of our hearts being enlightened would indicate that it is necessary to have the light of them in terms* before there can be the true knowledge in the heart. Two things are therefore essential for knowing these things; first, the spiritual state to apprehend the truth; second, the light brought before us through ministry from God.

[*In having the true spiritual state, the eyes of the heart become enlightened with the truth, which consequently brings the divine knowledge into the heart.]

Now we have the three objective matters that God would have us know; the hope of His calling; the riches of the glory of His inheritance in His saints; the exceeding greatness of His power towards the believer. God's calling, as made known thus far in the earlier part of the chapter has in mind the blessed relationship and position of sonship into which we have been brought. The hope of the calling is what actually awaits us in the coming day, when we enter into the fulness of the blessing prepared for us before the Father's face along with His dear Son.

We are also to know the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints. Even as of old Jehovah took possession of Canaan in Israel, so will He possess the universe in the coming day in those He has set apart for Himself, the saints of the present dispensation. Many an earthly inheritance is glorious to look upon, but it is poor as having low fertility and little mineral wealth; others may be rich in minerals, but far from glorious to the sight. God's inheritance to Israel was both glorious and rich as is learned from Deuteronomy 3:25; Deuteronomy 8:7-9, and other Scriptures. So also the vast heavenly inheritance of the coming day, yea the universal inheritance of which Christ is Heir, and which God is going to take up in Christ's co-heirs. Its glories and its riches far surpass all that we can conceive, for even at best, we see through a glass obscurely now. The language of 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 might well be taken up regarding the nature of this inheritance. Not to angels has God given this high honour, but to those who were poor sinners, cleansed and fitted in His grace and by the working of His divine power for His eternal glory and pleasure.

Moreover we are to know the exceeding greatness of God's power towards us; power that has been displayed in taking Christ from death and setting Him down in the highest place in heaven. This is the power that is going to accomplish all that lies in God's purpose; the power that will bring those God has marked out for blessing into the place

He has given them along with Christ. How strange it might seem to find the Man of God's purpose lying in death; the One who is to fill the universe as Head with the glory of God. But He was there for the glory of God, laying the basis in redemption for the bringing to pass of all that was in God's will; and it is from this point that God intervenes. He intervenes with a mighty display of His great power in the resurrection of Christ; in taking Him from the very lowest point, the point of man's greatest weakness, and exalting Him to the very pinnacle of the universe. This one mighty movement of God's power sets Christ above every sphere of earthly and heavenly government, and above every name of renown, both of the present age and the coming age of glory; and this power is about to bring us into the fulness of blessing within the Father's House, and into the inheritance to which we have been called.

Exalted and glorified, Christ has had all things put under His feet; and the Church has been united to Christ to share His exalted place. Even as Adam was head over the lower creation, and as Eve was united to him, so Christ has the Church united to Him, to share His place as Head over all the things in heaven and on earth. But the Church as Christ's body is part of Himself; united to Him by the Holy Spirit, in view of the day of the display of His glory. When Christ fills all in all, the Church, His fulness, is the living and glorious vessel in which the mind and will of the Head is expressed to the vast universe that He fills. What a day will that be for God, when He possesses the inheritance in His saints, and Christ fills the universe in His body.

Ephesians 2:1-22. The great power of God, manifested in taking Christ out of death and setting Him down at His right hand in the heavenlies, is here operative in quickening from among Gentile and Jew those whom God has marked out for blessing according to His eternal counsels. As quickened they now live in the knowledge of God's love, and have been raised up and made to sit in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Like Ephesians 1:12-13, the truth is presented separately regarding God's blessing of Gentile and Jew.

First of all, the Gentile is seen as dead in deeds offensive to God and in acts of lawlessness, walking in a course belonging to a world afar from God, where all subsists for the glory of man and for the gratification of his sinful nature. Blinded and led on by Satan, who brings the darkening influences of another realm into this world, of which he has become the god and Prince, those who disobey the truth of God (given in testimony in the Gospel) are found the willing slaves of his power and will. Spite of the light from God, given in God's goodness to Israel, the Jews were no better than the Gentiles, being sons of disobedience. Their lives were lived in fleshly lusts, dictated by the evil impulses of the flesh and by the thoughts of a mind in wilful opposition to God. Not one whit different into practice to the Gentiles; in nature they were children of wrath even as they. Being found without a movement within him answering to God, God must work entirely from Himself, according to His sovereign mercy, if man is to be blessed. But the God Who is presented in Ephesians 1:1-23 as rich in grace and rich in glory, is here seen as rich in mercy, because of His infinite and boundless compassions to Jew and Gentile. Found alike in moral and spiritual death, incapable of the slightest response to what is divine, God communicates to them His own life, an entirely different life to that given to Adam in Eden; it is the life in which His Own Son lives before His face in the heavenly places; and in this life they live with Christ in the sphere of glory and love that He fills. What a salvation is this! Saved out of death's clasp, and from the sinful condition that formerly marked us, we are now able to answer to the thoughts and feelings of the heart of God, as having His life. This salvation is altogether of grace; it is God's sovereign unmerited favour, unsought by us, and unknown till God took hold of us. Observe that quickening is not used of Christ here; in Ephesians 1:1-23 He is raised, but we are quickened before we are raised up. The reason is evident; quickening is a moral thought here, which never could apply to One Who is perfect in every moral feature, the Holy, Harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. But we are quickened that we might be suitable morally for association with that blessed perfect Man; that we might have part with Him, sharing His place before the face of His God and Father, and ultimately sharing with Him all the glory. In quickening us, God has given us a new state; but He has also given us a new position in raising us up and making us to sit in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This is the new place which belongs to those associated with the heavenly Christ; it is here we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, in a world of divine glory and

affections, established in new creation according to God's counsels. How wonderful, that we can turn away from this present world through which we pass, and look up to Christ in the heavenlies, and say "That is our place." Our thoughts should be centred there; our present course regulated by what God has so graciously given us in His own presence. Then God has told us what is before Him in so blessing us: He has given us this exalted position and manifested this marvellous and abundant kindness, to display before the universe in the coming ages, the surpassing riches of His grace. What kindness can compare with God's kindness? He has taken rebel and ruined sinners from the depths of sin and shame, and out from the power of death, and given them to share His Son's place in the brightest spot in heaven. Every saved soul in that vast assembly, sharing Christ's glory, will display to the admiring hosts of earth and heaven something of the wonderful kindness that brought him there, some feature of the grace of God in which He is so exceedingly rich.

Again we read that we are saved by grace. Whether we think of the beginning of the work of grace, in saving us from the dreadful plight we once were in, or its crown in bringing us to the place where grace is to be displayed, it must be evident that we had no hand in it at all; all is from God, His sovereign intervention to bless us. But faith laid hold on the salvation proffered in the Gospel; but even this precious faith did not spring from anything in us, it was the gift of God. Nor was this great salvation presented to man on the principle of works. The Law had proved man incapable of receiving on that principle; moreover, this principle excluded all thought of human boasting; that day of the display of His rich grace will be for God's boast, and ours of Him. God then has been working for us, to bring us into such untold blessing, but He has also been working with us and in us, for we are His workmanship. His workmanship is in new creation; we are formed after Christ's image in suitability for the place we have in Christ now in the heavenly places, and the place we shall have with Christ in the glory of the coming ages. But there is the present object of the new creation; the beautiful features of the new creation are to be manifested in the old creation circumstances in which we are now found. The light of heaven is to shine forth in the body of humiliation; the good works so manifest in the life of Jesus are to be richly shed in the Christian's walk. God has nothing else for us here than that we should walk in the steps of His dear Son. There is naught but good, perfect goodness in the new creation; and it is wonderful that its precious fruits can be brought to this barren waste in those on whom God has wrought. There are no good works in man naturally; he never could have received salvation on this ground; but what man could not produce for God, God has produced in man, and all the outcome of His wisdom, grace and power, in new creation.

Knowing our present portion in Christ, and our future in the glory with Christ, we are not to forget the pit from which we were dug. This will but serve to enhance in our eyes the richness of the grace of God. We were poor Gentile sinners in the flesh, and as uncircumcised, kept out of the place of privilege in which favoured Israel enjoyed dispensational and ceremonial nearness to God, with the knowledge of God in the revelation of Himself to the fathers and in the Old Testament Scriptures. As Gentiles we had no claim on Christ, for He was Israel's Messiah; nor could we claim blessing from the covenants containing the promises, for these were not made with the Gentiles; all that Israel possessed was for themselves, not for sharing with the nations. There was no single ray of hope to break in upon our darkness; a darkness in which we were as having given God up, not thinking it good to have Him in our knowledge. What a position! what a state!

what a prospect! Never a longing within the bosom for God, unaware of our desperate need, not a single glimmer of divine light upon our goings, not a prospect of blessing before us; but distanced from all good and love in our evil ways, our course was shaped for eternal misery in perdition.

What a contrast to all this is now ours through the intervention of God! We are in Christ Jesus, occupying this blessed place before God's face, having been brought into this place of nearness by the precious blood of Christ. The blood that was sprinkled on the mercy seat of old, and before it seven times, foreshadowed for us God's glory secured in bringing a people near to Himself by the blood of Him Who shall fill the whole universe with God's glory. And Christ Himself is the peace of Jew and Gentile blessed in Him, and made one in Him. There are very pronounced distinctions between Jew and Gentile; they are not one in position, manner of life, religion or outlook; the law has made these distinctions; it was a wall which kept the Jew separate from the Gentile. The law set out what kind of life the Jews should live; they were to live for God as apart from the Gentiles with all their idolatry and corruption. But in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the law has been set aside as the rule of life for the converted Jew; it never was the rule of life for the Gentile; nor was it ever given as the rule for the Christian's life. Christ is the rule of life for the Christian; and it is in Him that God has formed Jew and Gentile into one new man. Two different kinds of men, both sinners, could not but be at enmity, for both had different and opposing rules of life. Indeed, the Jew had the law as his rule of life, but the Gentile was lawless, doing what was right in his own eyes. But God has now ONE man, and he is a NEW man. Hence there can no longer exist the old enmity. Both Jew and Gentile have gone from before God's eye, and the new man that is before Him bears all the blessed features of Christ, His well-beloved Son. But God has not only brought the Jew and Gentile believers into right relations with each other; He has brought them into right relations with Himself. There was not only the enmity existing between Jew and Gentile, which kept them apart, the law of commandments contained in ordinances; there was also the natural enmity of man's heart to God, in Jew as well as Gentile. That enmity had to go before man could be reconciled to God. How was God going to dispel the enmity of the human heart towards Him? The answer is found in the Cross of Christ. In that Cross, in which the heart of God has been told out in all its mighty love, our old man was crucified with Christ; the old man in whom there were found and displayed the features which alike marked both Jew and Gentile; and the love of God told out there has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, thus displacing every bit of enmity towards God in those who have the Spirit. This wonderful reconciliation has been effected in one body, into which all believers, whether Jew or Gentile, have been formed for the pleasure of God. That the rich blessings, secured by His death, might be brought to us, Christ Jesus has preached peace to the far off Gentiles through the Gospel, and peace to the Jews who were near to God as His earthly people. Both needed the good news of peace, which could never have been found by the lawless Gentile, or enjoyed under the labour and burdens of an exacting and cursing law. And not only does the Christ bring to us the blessedness of peace, but through Him Jew and Gentile, have access by One Spirit to the Father. Here we reach what God has in mind for us while awaiting the full blessing of the coming day. His presence is open to us; it is to HIMSELF that we can come, to be found before Him in the deep enjoyment of His love, to enter into the glorious thoughts revealed in His purpose, and to worship Him in spirit and in truth. What communion is ours! This is now ours in the nearest possible relationship to the FATHER himself.

Such privileges and blessings being ours, we can realise that we are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God. We participate in a spiritual and heavenly way in all the blessings and privileges of the City and House of God. Of this spiritual structure the New Testament apostles and prophets form the foundation, perhaps both personally and in their writings; and as having received the truth ministered by them, we have been built upon the foundation. Of this building, Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone; the One upon whom every section and every line of the structure converges; who gives character, ornament, and beauty to each detail and to the whole, and in whom we read every thought of God relating to its erection, purpose and glory. In this glorious Person, the whole structure is reared; it all bears His features; it grows gracefully and silently (like Solomon's building) towards its glorious destiny, a holy temple in the Lord. When the building is completed, with every saint of this dispensation in his own place, according to God's counsels, it will be the shrine of His glory, the vessel in which God will dwell to display what He is in the Lord Jesus; Who from this place will administrate the world to come. Meanwhile, as acknowledging the authority of the Lord, the saints are built together for a dwelling of God by the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 3:1-21. A comparison of the opening verses of Ephesians 3:1-21 and Ephesians 4:1-32 shows that this chapter is a parenthesis. On the basis of the great unfoldings of the previous chapters, Paul is about to exhort the saints, and to emphasize his remarks speaks of himself as a prisoner on their account: this at once leads him to develop the truth of the mystery, the announcing of which had brought him into bonds. Had he preached only to the Jews, or proclaimed a Gospel which gave the Gentiles blessings on a lower plane than the Jews, he would not have been so persistently and bitterly assailed; nor would he have now been incarcerated at Rome. But he gladly accepted his lot, glorying in being the prisoner of Christ Jesus.

Having received an administration of divine grace for the Gentiles, Paul had the privilege of making it known in his ministry of the Gospel, and in his ministry of the truth of the mystery. This mystery, a wonderful divine secret, as we shall learn, was not given to Paul by man; he received it directly from heaven. Apart from the divine disclosure to him, he could not have spoken of the things connected with the mystery in the previous chapters; the truth of the church as the body of Christ in Ephesians 1:1-23 and the reconciling of Jew and Gentile in one body to God as declared in Ephesians 2:1-22 could not have been made known without the knowledge of the truth of the mystery. This glorious secret reveals that Jew and Gentile in being united to each other by the Spirit are also united to Christ their Head in heaven.

God had not made known the mystery to the saints of old; nor was it hidden for them or for us in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Many things which have now come out plainly in the Gospel are to be found in the writings of the prophets. Peter expressly declares this; the prophets looked into their own writings to discover the secrets connected with the sufferings and glory of Christ, but the Holy Spirit told them that certain things they had ministered were for the saints of a coming generation and not for themselves. But THE MYSTERY was not among these secret things; its revelation awaited the ascension of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit. It was not to Paul only that God made known this secret — although the ministry of it was peculiarly his — but also to the apostles and New Testament prophets by the Holy Spirit. Here, the mystery is unfolded in three distinct parts: Jew and Gentile are joint-heirs, a joint-body, and joint partakers of God's promise in Christ by the Gospel. That Israel had been promised an inheritance by God was well known.

Abraham was the heir of the world, and his seed became partakers of the promises, nor will God set aside His promise for Israel's blessing; but there had never been a hint in the Old Testament of an inheritance in which Jew and Gentile would partake on the same footing without discrimination. Israel's promised inheritance was earthly, but the mystery divulges an inheritance hitherto unknown, a heavenly inheritance, yea one which enfolds all that has been created, of which Christ, according to God's purpose, is the heir, and the saints joint-heirs together and with Him. The Jew had no natural claim on this great and glorious inheritance any more than the poor outcast Gentile, but in believing the Gospel both are brought into the most exalted place to share the high honour of association with Him whom God has glorified in view of acquiring the purchased possession. Nor is there any hint in the Old Testament of the removal of the distinctions between Jew and Gentile, and that they should be formed together into one body. God had promised that in Abraham and in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, but this gave Israel the central and dominating place among the nations. Again God told Israel that if they were faithful they would be the head and the nations would be the tail, and if they were unfaithful they would be the tail and the nations would be the head; even as it has come to pass in Israel's history. The Mystery brings out something of an entirely different character, something beyond all human conception, what is the fruit of God's love and wisdom; that the Jew and Gentile should be formed into a living organism, functioning for the pleasure and will of God, in which the life and heavenly features of His dear Son should be manifested and continued in the world out of which He was cast by men.

Moreover Jew and Gentle jointly partake of God's promise, set forth in Christ, and made known in the Gospel. This is not a promise of the old economy, for the Gentiles were strangers to the covenants of promise; they were without hope on that line, for the promises belonged to Israel. Paul tells us something of this promise elsewhere. To Timothy he writes of himself as apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will "according to the PROMISE OF LIFE — which is in Christ Jesus;" and to Titus he says "In hope of eternal life, which God, Who cannot lie PROMISED BEFORE THE AGES OF TIME." God's promise in Christ belongs to eternity, it is not at all connected with the promises made to the saints on earth in former days. Eternal life and all connected with it in the glory of God infinitely transcends the best of earth, and to this Jew and Gentile have been jointly called. God has promised us heavenly things in the Gospel, things belonging to the heavenly Christ; the hope He has made ours is laid up for us in heaven; all for Jew and Gentile jointly belong to the new creation, are spiritual, heavenly, and eternal. Of this precious mystery, Paul was God's chosen minister; it was the gift of God's grace to him to make known to others what had been communicated to him. For such a work the grace of God must form the vessel in consonance with the character of the ministry, and this is accomplished by the working of His power. If God would have Paul present Jesus as Son of God in his preaching, He first of all reveals His Son IN him; so here, there must be an inward spiritual formative divine work in keeping with the truth to be ministered; the vessel is formed, fitted, and filled by God. Paul realises the magnitude of the favour bestowed upon him, and viewing himself in the light of this surpassing grace, he speaks of himself as less than the least of all saints. A true estimation of grace makes us appear small in our own eyes, and enables us to carry out the divine service entrusted according to God's will.

Grace, known in the heart through communion with God, enabled Paul to announce among the Gentiles the Gospel of the unsearchable riches of the Christ. The wonderful nature of this Gospel

and the opposition it brought both demanded the constant supply of grace in its preaching. Prophets, sent from God, had told of the coming King; the glories of the Messiah, long promised, had been seen in vision and were spoken of and sung with rapture. These were the searchable riches of the Christ, made known to Israel, the riches and glories adumbrated in David and in Solomon. Great are the glories that shall yet shine forth on earth, as Christ comes out of the ivory palaces, His garments smelling of the sweet spices, and made glad through the praises of His willing people. But the Gospel preached by Paul speaks of greater riches, the unsearchable riches of the Heavenly Christ. What dazzling glory shines in Jesus' face! All the glory and riches belonging to the place He fills as the Head over all things to the church, the Head of the body, the Head of every principality and authority in the vast universe, yea of every office and place He now fills and shall yet fill for the glory of God and pleasure of the Father. There is the boundless wealth belonging to Him as a Divine Person, but here it is rather what has been put into His hand as the Man of God's counsels, the Anointed Man who fills the throne.

Paul was also to enlighten men with the truth of the administration of the mystery. This administration belongs to the working of God, who through the Gospel secures both Jew and Gentile, and by His Spirit brings them together for the fulfilling of His will. From every clime, from different nations, from every class of society, God is drawing men together by His grace; and is forming them into a company suitable for union with Christ, to have part with Him in His glory, and to be for His holy affections. Even now God's mind is being carried out in and through that company, in His own great wisdom; it is the only company on earth which knows God's mind and which can set forth His thoughts. It is not here a question of the church's failure; it is what God is doing in spite of all our failure. But He wants us to know His thoughts; we are to be intelligent in the carrying out of His will. Thinking again of the unique and glorious character of the mystery, Paul tells us that it was hidden throughout the ages in God. Here is the deep, deep secret of God's heart, the fruit of His counsels of love, the crown of all His activities, the Masterpiece of His skill and workmanship, and the completion of His word. He did not tell this to Abraham, His friend, or to Moses to whom He made known His ways; this wonderful, precious secret, nestled in God's own bosom throughout the ages till Christ was set down at His own right hand.

Observe too that the present moment was before God's mind in creating the universe; the considering of which surely magnifies the importance of the day in which our lot is cast. It is in this day, when all around to natural sight is confusion and failure in the church, that God is displaying to the greatest of heavenly beings the resources and treasures of His wisdom. Herein is wisdom that could not be unfolded in the power and glory that outshone in the works of creation, that could not be disclosed in God's ways with the Patriarchs, with Israel, or in the government of the world. The hosts of heaven could sing and shout for joy at the laying of the earth's foundations, and in God's providential dealings with men they have doubtless seen wonderful things; but God had reserved the display of His all varied wisdom for the present time, when a company of men should be gathered out from men for the pleasure of God; in whom God wrought in new creation, forming them into one body in Christ, and continuing in them the precious moral features that were manifested in His Son in this world. That God should form such a wonderful vessel from such material surely displays a wisdom far excelling that hitherto manifested in all God's operations in the universe; that in that vessel God's thoughts should be intelligently manifested by and in those He has wrought in new creation must cause the heavenly hosts to marvel at God's ways. How

very feebly have our poor hearts entered into the greatness of God's thoughts regarding what the church is for Himself at this moment of time! Creation is but the platform on which the purpose of the ages, which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, is being wrought out and displayed. Before a single movement occurred to usher in the creation, the great plan was before God in all its completeness; and all that has transpired throughout the preceding ages, has but subserved His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus. The Gospel is not an afterthought with God, but was in His counsels; necessary for the accomplishing of His purpose, that Christ might be the Head of a universe filled with glory. And while awaiting our part with Christ in the coming glory, we know the joy of access to God's presence with holy boldness in true liberty of spirit, as being in Christ and as having the faith of Christ. In telling the saints of his bonds on their account, Paul desires them not to faint, but rather to boast. Well might they delight to speak of the grace given to Paul to suffer for their sakes, that they might be enriched with such wonderful divine communications. But the natural tendency is to faint in knowing that the one, who had brought to them the testimony of God was incarcerated on its account. Would there not be the tendency to fear and shrink from the afflictions that faithfulness to such a testimony would bring? But Paul prays for them to the Father, yea, in the deepening exercise of his heart and increased earnestness for their blessing, he bows his knees. The prayer of Ephesians 1:1-23 has the calling, the inheritance, and the power of God, as its subject, three objective matters; here the subject matter of the apostle's prayer is largely subjective. One element may be looked upon as objective, "to apprehend — the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;" but the thought of apprehending that vast sphere of divine glory is also subjective. There are five elements clearly subjective:

(1) The strengthening of the inner man;

(2) Christ dwelling in the heart by faith;

(3) Being rooted and grounded in love;

(4) To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge;

(5) To be filled unto all God's fulness. Does not the apostle pray for the saints as realising that clear exposition of the truth will not of itself produce the impression that God desires to make upon the hearts and lives of His people? If we are to receive right impressions in the heart through the communication of the truth, the heart must be in a proper state. Still, it is good to know that listening to the truth produces the very exercise that will give the state of heart to receive it.

Paul then prays to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family of men and angels in heaven, and every family of men on earth, is named,; each family blessed of the Father in the peculiar relationship in which it stands to the Father for all eternity. Each family will have its own place and portion, for there are many abodes in the Father's House; the church being named "The church of the firstborn ones, whose names are written in heaven." What deep satisfaction to the Father's heart, to have every family in the vast universe in right relations with Him. The sons of God who once shouted for joy, will still be there; but there will be many families of men, all redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, responding to the Father's love. The Father is the source of all, and all will return to the Father; and He will rest in the securing of all that Christ has brought to Him, when all things are reconciled. The first part of the request is that the Father, according to the riches of His glory, would give us to be strengthened with might by His Spirit, in

the inner man. Every believer, as having been wrought upon by God, and as having received the Holy Spirit, has the spiritual capacity for the reception of truth; but it is evident from this verse that special communications from God require special divine preparation of heart, if these communications are to be impressed on the heart. But there are great divine resources for the production of this spiritual state, the riches of the Father's glory. Does not this imply that it is as occupied with the Father's glory that the Holy Spirit will form us to receive the truth of the Father's counsels? We are prone to be engrossed with our needs, and it may also be with our service for the Lord, things which are necessary to speak to the Lord about; but there should be time for communion with the Father about His things, about His glory and Him who, in that glory, sits upon the Father's throne. Engaged then with the glory of the Father, in the many ways in which it is brought before us, the inner man is strengthened with divine power by the Father's Spirit. And if engaged with Him in whom the riches of the Father's glory shine, the apostle prays that He, the Christ might dwell in our hearts by faith. If Christ dwells in the seat of our affections, at the centre of the moral being, will He not control all the inward springs, the thoughts, the feelings, the desires, and every impulse and movement? Moreover the word here is "The Christ" which would embrace all connected with Christ in the place He occupies as God's anointed Man. Do all Christ's interests engage our affections? Are we truly concerned about all that belongs to Christ in the place of glory in which the Father has enshrined Him? Things down here would lose their hold upon the heart if the Christ had His true and rightful place there. It was just in this the Ephesians broke down later on; the Christ lost His place in their hearts, for they left their first love. Faith looks to Christ, brings Him into every circumstance, controls every inward movement, and consequently the whole life. Being rooted and founded in love, is having our springs in the love manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ knowing divine love in present enjoyment, and allowing no present circumstance to move us from the sense that we are loved by the Father and the Son. If our roots are in love, we shall grow in love, and manifest too all the precious features and fruit of love and founded in love, like a building resting upon a solid rock foundation, our souls are firmly established in a love, proved to the utmost, and known to be eternal, infinite, and unchangeable. Is this the state of our souls? Alas! too often the thoughts are concerned with other things, the mind and spirit are not resting in the divine nature, and not drawing upon and being built up in the love of God. With the inner man divinely prepared in occupation with the Father's glory, with Christ having His home and holding sway in our hearts, and with all our springs in love, we may take our stand, in spirit with all saints, to behold a wonderful vista. What a vast scene opens up before the spirit, depth, length, breadth, and height. Is it not the glorious sphere in which the Mystery is the centre piece? That is surely the realm in which the glory of God will be displayed in the church, in Christ Jesus, for all eternity; where the unsearchable riches of the Christ shall shine forth; where the glory of the Father, in all its effulgence, shall fill the universe where He rests, and in which He shall find His joy and pleasure for evermore. Abraham, from his place, was privileged to view the land of promise, north, south, east, and west; and Moses, from Pisgah, beheld the same; but how surpassingly great our privilege, to stand even now in spirit with Christ, Who dwells in the heart by faith, and to view that glorious scene, in which all that the Father is in His nature and glory are displayed. It is easy to understand now why the inner man needs to be strengthened, for here is something far too wonderful to behold without divine preparation of heart and spirit. As we explore these vast fields of glory, our hearts rest in the love of Christ. How needful for our hearts to feel the throbbings of that love as we survey the glory. We are to have part in that glory, but with Him who loves us with

a love that passes knowledge. His love has been expressed in death, but the object before Him was to bring us into that wonderful glory, that we might share it as His companions. We shall enjoy the love of Christ fully in that day, but God's desire for us is that we might know it now, and know it as a love which passes knowledge. The final desire of the prayer is that we might be filled to all the fulness of God. All the fulness was pleased to dwell in the Son while on earth, in view of reconciling all things to the Godhead, and all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Him now at God's right hand; as our poor vessels are emptied of self and all connected with the present course of things, they may be filled with the fulness of God, if we are in communion with God about these great things, opened out by the Spirit in this epistle. God's desire for us then is that every one should be so filled with His fulness that our lives should be the reflection, in a moral way, of the glory set before us. As united to Christ by the Spirit, we live in things that are eternal; and we are to live here in the power of what is eternal and heavenly, bringing into every relationship in which we are found the features of Christ, entering intelligently into God's will and purpose. In the measure in which we are filled with God's fulness, these things will characterise us. But it is not only filled with the fulness, but filled unto the fulness, for that fulness can not only fill our poor vessels, but also the vast universe of God in Christ.

Engaged with our own weakness in the light of the illimitable resources of God, we might well be dismayed, but God is our God, and He desires to bless us and fill us with His fulness; indeed He is able to do far exceedingly above all that we ask or think. Where there is any desire on our part to enter into God's thoughts, and to be marked by the features set forth in the prayer, we can speak to God about it, in the sure knowledge that He is able to do above all we ask or think. Within us, in the Holy Spirit who indwells us, is the power to accomplish God's will in all these things; it is simply then a matter of allowing the Holy Spirit to engage us with Christ, the object of the Father's pleasure, and the centre of all His counsels of glory and love; and as we are so engaged the vessel will become emptied of all desires and thoughts after present things, and be filled even unto God's fulness.

We can surely join with the apostle in this note of praise to the Father, ascribing glory to Him. When the fulness of God has accomplished all for His pleasure in the days of the administration of the mystery, it shall display itself in glory in the church for eternity. What has been manifested in grace will be displayed in glory! Unfailing treasures of glory are to be displayed in the eternal age, shining with brilliance and splendour in the church, reflected from Christ in whom it subsists. All the glory belongs to God, and is in His dear Son, His anointed One; but the church is the vessel through which the light of the glory streams. And what a vessel! Formed in the wisdom and power of God, conceived in eternal love, the fruit of His counsels, fashioned in the skill of His own workmanship, meet for the display of His own glory. Contemplating such a consummation to all God's ways, and to all Christ's toil, the apostle says, "Amen;" and every heart that beats true to the Father and the Son would join to repeat, "Amen."

Ephesians 4:1-32. The truth of the mystery having been developed, and the saints prayed for in relation to this great revelation, Paul is now free to continue from the point at which he broke off in the first verse of Ephesians 3:1-21. As prisoner for the truth's sake in faithfulness to the Lord, and because of his great love for them, evinced in sufferings through which he had passed and was passing, the apostle was surely competent to freely exhort the saints in line with what he had written to them. Their divine calling, holy and exalted. is to have a practical answer in this world;

therefore Paul desires that the saints should walk becomingly, bringing the light and dignity of the divine call into the minutest detail of life, walking in the steps of Jesus. Our course down here is to be worthy of sonship, worthy of being united to Christ as members of His body, worthy of being the dwelling place of God; and the true heavenly dignity that is ours is to be manifested in low thoughts of self, the absence of all self assertiveness, in endurance through manifold trials, and in bearing with one another in love.

Only by expressing the features of Jesus can we go on together as Christians in this world, and this no doubt accounts for their coming in before the exhortation to use diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit. Viewed essentially, as subsisting in the Spirit, this unity cannot be broken, but looked at practically, where human responsibility exists, it has been broken to pieces. Nevertheless it is still possible for saints, by diligence and by the manifestation of the traits of Jesus, to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. This unity cannot be kept where man's mind and will control; only where there is liberty for the Spirit to make known the mind and will of God, and where there is the habitual endeavour to carry out the expressed thoughts of God. Such a condition cannot be enforced, it is the fruit of communion, hence the word "in the uniting bond of peace." How very far removed this is from the common desire, even among true believers, of peace at any price. If divine principles are sacrificed for peace, this is not the peace of the unity of the Spirit, which can only be kept where God's word regulates everything. From the unity of the Spirit the apostle passes to the great circles of unity, existing in relation to the Persons of the Godhead, where believers have their part. The first circle is in relation to the Holy Spirit, and may be looked upon as the true Christian circle, where is the one body which has been formed by the One Spirit. Only true believers in Christ have part here; we are members of the body by the new creative work of God, a body which derives its nutrition and direction from its heavenly Head. There is but ONE body, a truth which is to govern all who would endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit. Again there is but ONE Spirit, who is to guide and to lead all who have part in this living circle of blessing and privilege. In God's dealings with men providentially, the Holy Spirit is spoken of as "The Seven Spirits," but in Christianity He is the One Spirit, the power uniting all that belongs to God in the new creation circle into which He has called and brought us. The hope of our calling is to enter into the glory with Christ, and be with Him before the Father, in the joy of His love, for evermore. This hope belongs to every member of Christ's body; one destiny awaits us all; we have but ONE hope of our calling. In the second circle all relates to the ONE Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ, and is evidently the circle of Christian profession. The ONE faith is the doctrine of Christianity, given to us in the Holy Scriptures, which Jude tells us was "once delivered to the saints." No man could be looked upon as a Christian (in any sense) who refused to acknowledge Jesus as Lord, or who did not accept the Scriptures as the setting forth of the doctrine of Christianity. It may be that some say "Lord, Lord" in a mere formal recognition of Jesus, without divinely given faith in the soul; and nominally assent to the body of Christian teaching without its having power in their lives; but this could not invalidate the reality to the true believer that there is ONE Lord and ONE faith, truths which delight his heart and regulate his walk and ways. Entrance to the circle of Christian profession is by baptism, and in Christianity there is but ONE baptism. It might be that Jews are baptised in the Name of Jesus Christ; that some were baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and others baptised in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; but it is the same baptism, the truth of which is opened out to us in different Scriptures. The third circle is the universal circle, where all things are in relation to God the Father. God the Father

is the source of all the things found in the universe; He is supreme, and His impress is found upon all. Who can look into the heavens by night, or examine through the microscope the minute creatures that come from God's hand without discerning His creatorial glory. Even if man has fallen, and has degraded himself and brought God's glory with dishonour into the dust, he still bears the image of God, no matter how badly he may have disfigured it. As Christians, if we would keep the unity of the Spirit, there must be the recognition of God in the universe He has brought into being. No one could claim to keep the unity of the Spirit if he accepted human theories regarding the creation. If God permeates the vast universe, He dwells in His saints. It is one thing that it can be said of men generally regarding God, "In Him we live and move and exist," and quite another that God dwells in His saints.

Grace is given by Christ, according to His wisdom and sovereign pleasure, to all His saints; each receiving what Christ desires to be expressed in testimony in this world. Every bit of grace given sets forth the triumph of Christ over the enemy, for before communicating it He must first lead captivity captive. There are also special gifts from Christ, enumerated in Ephesians 4:11; they are given from the place of His exaltation and supremacy. While on earth the Lord appointed twelve apostles, but when He went on high their apostleship was reckoned to them in a new way, and there were others who received this same gift (Acts 14:14; Galatians 1:19). It is not that the apostleship of the twelve is gone forever; their names are found in the heavenly city as "The twelve apostles of the Lamb;" but the foundation of the building of Ephesians 2:20 not only contains all the apostles of the glorified Christ, but also the prophets given from heaven. Before imparting these gifts the Lord Jesus went down into the lower parts of the earth, into the dark domain of death. Coming forth in triumph He has ascended, having overcome every hostile principality and authority; leading captive every foe; annulling the power of the enemy; ascending above all the heavens to fill all things. The descent of the Lord here is not from heaven, as in Php 2:6-7; it is from the earth, where, as Man He had been for the glory of God. Have we not here the presentation of a Man great enough to enter in His own might into the domain of death, and great enough in His glorious triumph to pass through the heavens? How blessed to see the greatness of Man, the Man of God's right hand, whom He has made strong for Himself. Like Samson, He goes down to the citadel of the enemy, where the gates are closed upon Him, and in triumph He tears away the door, bar and all, and carries them in triumph to the top of the hill. This glorious Man is going to fill all things! In passing from the lower parts of the earth to His place above all heavens, He has passed through every sphere in the universe in the might of His glory and in the display of His wonderful victory; none in all these spheres could challenge His power or His title, and when His present session is completed, He will be manifested to fill all things. When Christ fills all things He will not be alone, for in Ephesians 1:1-23 we have seen the church to be the fulness of Him who fills all in all. Therefore, from His present place in glory He is even now working to secure, fit, and educate the members of His body for their place with Him in the universe of glory that He is about to fill. To this end He has given gifts to men, some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some shepherds and teachers. As we have seen from the close of Ephesians 2:1-22 the foundation work has been laid in the work and writings of the apostles and prophets; the members of Christ's body are called by the Gospel preached by the evangelists; the saints are cared for and taught by the pastors and teachers (a joint gift) that they might learn the mind of God and walk for His pleasure. God desires to have His saints grow to maturity; He would have them entering intelligently into His thoughts for them, and the gifts are given with this in view. Moreover

there is a definitely ordained ministry from the ascended Christ to maintain what is of God in this world. The Risen and Ascended Christ cares for His church, His eye is ever upon it; He needs not that men should ordain those whom men educate to care for His assembly. He will see to it that there are gifts for the edification of His body, so that His saints being fed and nourished, might function in the place divinely given to them. The work of the ministry will continue, nor will the body cease to be edified, until we all come to the unity of the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God. If the apostles and prophets have personally gone home, they remain with us in their writings; there are still evangelists, pastors and teachers. Although no spiritual person would presume in this day of brokenness and ruin to call himself an evangelist, pastor or teacher, the gift, where possessed, is readily recognised. Yet in spite of all the ruin, Christ will continue the work of the ministry, until all saints hold in their souls the doctrine as it is set forth in the Scriptures, and until all know the blessed Son of God in the height of His glory, in the abundance of His heavenly resources, and in the deep affections of His heart. "The faith" is really the great sphere of divine revelation, and "The Son of God" is the One who fills that sphere. Only as we learn the truth from the word of God can we arrive at the unity of the faith; and only as we are truly acquainted with the Son of God in living communion can we arrive practically at the unity of the knowledge of the Son of God. But the gifts are also given to bring the saints to the full-grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ. In Ephesians 1:1-23 the church is seen, according to Gods counsels, as the fulness of the Christ who fills all in all; here the gifts are given to bring the saints practically to what the church is in the counsels of God. Christ's rich and wise provision for our spiritual development and education is made that we might not remain immature and unskilled in His word, that we might not be affected by all the varied doctrines of religious leaders, whose diversity and contradiction manifest that they have no part in the unity of the faith. Craftily manipulating the Scriptures to give colour to their teachings, such men use every device, conceived by the cunning of man, to build up their evil systems, from which the true Christ is excluded. The divine safeguard against all this is to hold the truth in love. It is not enough to be mentally acquainted with the truth: the truth must be held in the affections and manifested in the life, as only then can we grow up to Christ, the Head, in whom every feature of the truth subsists. All our resources are in Christ, who can direct us aright, keeping us from all the evil teachings that abound, feeding the soul, sustaining and satisfying the heart; being withal the object upon which our eyes can rest with perfect delight, so that beholding in Him the truth in all its beauty and rich perfection we take character from Himself to answer to Him in His traits of heavenly grace. Thus it is that the church comes to the full-grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ.

Every member of the body stands related to Christ the Head, and also in relation to every other member of the body upon earth; and all the supply for the body comes from the Head, being communicated to the different members by the joints of supply. This is not a matter of formal ministry, for the gifts are not in the body as such. Gift is largely connected with the house: in the body all are members. But each member of the body has its place and function, that each saint might contribute, according to his measure, to the building up of the body. Administration has its place in the Christian economy, so has gift, as the earlier verses show; but we must not forget that there is a living organism here on earth, the production of God, maintained by the Head in heaven, yet self-edified by the effectual working of every part. Love, in which the truth is held for the pleasure of God, is that in which the body is built up for the well-being of the saints.

Participating in such grace and privilege, the practical life of the saints should be marked by different features from those of the Gentiles around, among whom they once had their communion. The reception of divine grace demands that our walk should be for the glory of God. The ungodly Gentiles are not affected by the revelation of God; their steps are directed by their own vain thoughts, and unenlightened in their souls they have not the divine life that God has given to the Christian. Ignorant and hard hearted, and throwing off all the tender feelings properly belonging to men, such have given themselves up to the base passions of their fallen and unregenerate nature, which can never be satisfied. A glance at Romans 1:21-32 will show how man got into this debased condition. Men gave God up in three distinct ways; consequently God gave man up body, soul, and mind. How different from all this are God's things, the things we have learned in the Christian revelation, as having heard Christ's word and voice in the Gospel, as knowing the truth as it is in Jesus, learned through the wonderful provision made for our instruction by the ascended Son of God.

There are three parts of this precious truth stated:

(1) Our having put off the old man;

(2) Being renewed in the spirit of our mind;

(3) Our having put on the new man. The old man is the embodiment of every proclivity and moral feature of Adam fallen, developed in the whole human race. In the cross this man was fully exposed and received his judgment from the hand of God, he was crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6); in our confession of the Lord Jesus we have accepted the judgment of God on our old man, having virtually said, "I have finished with that man for ever." Baptism is really the professed putting off the old man. Then there is to be the practical recognition of this in the putting off the habits belonging to the old man whom we have disowned. Christianity gives a complete change of the spirit of the mind, which being renewed, enables us to look at things in an entirely new way. Self and the world no longer colour the outlook; our thoughts, desires, feelings, and purpose are quite new, being controlled by Christ and His interests. Like the thought of the old man, the thought of the new is abstract. If the old man is the embodiment of all that is evil, the new man is the embodiment of every moral feature pleasurable to God. Every feature of righteousness, love, and holiness, the beautiful traits manifested down here in Jesus, belongs to the new man created by God. This new man is not Christ Personally; he is Christ characteristically. From Ephesians 4:25-32, Ephesians 5:1-2 we learn how righteousness is to mark the saints; from Ephesians 5:3-21 it is rather holiness that is prominent. Indeed we may look upon the remaining part of the epistle as the expression of the features of the new man, created according to God in righteousness and holiness of truth.

(1) The public testimony is more in view in Ephesians 4:25-32; Ephesians 5:1-21;

(2) The home circle is contemplated in Ephesians 5:22-33; Ephesians 6:1-4;

(3) Ephesians 6:5-9 would be for us today the business circle, but may be for some part of the home circle;

(4) The sphere of conflict in Ephesians 6:10-20. Our relations with each other are much before the apostle; "every man with his neighbour" (Ephesians 5:25); "to one another kind" (Ephesians 5:32);

"speaking to yourselves" (Ephesians 5:19); "submitting yourselves to one another" (Ephesians 5:21). Having put off the old man and put on the new man, we are to finish with everything savouring of falsehood, and to be wholly occupied in speaking what bears the character of truth; and this because we are indissolubly connected in divine ties in the body of Christ. No one would wilfully damage a member of his physical body; surely the members of Christ's body are dearer to us and of far more value. Communicating truth to each other will bring edification, for the truth builds up.

Righteous anger has a place and time, but we must watch lest the devil gets in. Oftentimes we begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh; the divine safeguard for us is to keep short accounts, for prolonged anger is almost certain to lose its righteous character and make room for the devil. The erstwhile stealer is not to return to his wrong ways, but with toil and honest work provide for his own needs and also for the needs of others. What a contrast to taking from others this is; it is the fulfilment of the righteous requirement of the law, loving his neighbour as himself. Our mouths are to express the features of the new man; pure and edifying words are to evince a good and graceful conversation, beneficial to those who listen.

God's Holy Spirit in sealing us has claimed us for the day when all shall be claimed in redemption, so that we must not allow anything unholy in our thoughts, words, or ways that would grieve Him. Our feelings are dulled by acquaintance with sin, but how infinitely sensitive the Holy Spirit is to anything which savours of impurity, falsehood, or unrighteousness. Every trait of the flesh, whether in the inward feelings of the heart or as expressed by the tongue or other members of our bodies, is to be put from us kindness, compassion, and forgiveness the rather marking us. God has shown His forgiveness to us in Christ, who died for our sins upon the cross; we are to come out like God in our dealings with one another.

Ephesians 5:1-33. Our duty and privilege as God's beloved children is to imitate Him, to manifest His character, being marked by His compassions. How wonderful is His love to us, and how great the kindness and affection told out in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The deep love of the Lord Jesus caused Him to die for us, a death in which God has been perfectly glorified, and in which the Lord offered Himself for the pleasure of the heart of God. Not only did He give all He possessed, like the man who bought the field and the merchant who sought the pearls (Matthew 13:1-58)

He gave HIMSELF, and more He could not give. Christ was the true Burnt Offering, who gave Himself up to death to secure the glory of God, and the acceptance of those whom God would bless. All the inwards of the spotless victim were laid upon the altar, for in that death the perfection of the inward thoughts and feelings of Christ were brought out for the delight of God. There were no selfish motives with Christ; He went into death that the world might know that He loved the Father, but also in obedience to the Father's commandment. What sorrows, what sufferings were Christ's, but He considered not Himself; His constant desire was the Father's will. Do we not have the answer to the Peace Offering in Christ being a sacrifice to God? The Burnt Offering was wholly for God, but the offerer and the priest had their part in the Peace Offering. How great is the privilege of contemplating in communion with the Father and the Son the perfections of Jesus made known in His death. While feeding upon the Christ who died for us we can think of the Father's portion, the fat and the inwards, the food of the offering, all the inward excellencies and perfections of Christ ascending up as a sweet savour for Him. Christ's love for us, told out in this

wonderful death, is to affect us in our walk down here; He is our pattern, and we are to be for God's glory and pleasure as manifesting Christ's spirit.

How vile and unsavoury are the lusts of the flesh, they are the very antithesis of the holiness, purity, and sweet odour of what we have just considered. Such things should not therefore be named among those who are set apart for God; our conversation too should be pure, and even what is called harmless jesting is not convenient, thanksgiving being more suitable for Christians. Those who walk in uncleanness cannot have part in the Kingdom of Christ and of God, for all there is pure and holy, like God Himself; and spite of man protesting his religion and philosophy, the wrath of God will assuredly fall on all who have disobeyed the commandments of God. Why then should we have fellowship with those upon whom God's judgment is about to fall? Like them, darkness once marked us, it was the principle of our moral being, the controlling force of our lives, so that not a single thought or action of ours was in harmony with the will of God. Now we are light in the Lord, having derived this nature from God and as having come under the authority of the Lord Jesus, where God and His will are known. We are to walk then as children of light, transparent in all our steps, nothing covered up in our movements, manifesting the fruit of light in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, proving in the path of His will what pleases Him. The works of darkness bear no fruit, for God, so that we are not to participate in them any more than with those who do them, but rather are we to expose such works by the manifestation of what is divine. Things are seen in their true character when the knowledge of God is brought to bear upon them. The light that reveals God exposes everything inconsistent with His nature and character.

Although every true believer is alive spiritually, some are so influenced by present things as to be little different, in their practical life, from the men of the world. Such are not dead, but through earthly mindedness, worldliness, or lethargy are asleep among the dead. They are called upon to awake, and to arise from the company in which they are found, that the invigorating rays of the heavenly Christ might shine upon them, to energise them afresh, and to bring them renewed joy and blessing. Our every step is to be taken with care, directed by divine wisdom in a course the worldling has never known or trod, and every opportunity for the manifestation of good, where all is evil, is to be seized with earnestness. In such a world there is no occasion for the Christian to be foolish; his business is to learn the will of the Lord.

Drunkenness does not belong to the new man, but to the old man that we put off. Our ecstasy is from the Spirit of God, not from wine, which excites the natural man. Moreover, those filled with the Spirit are marked by joy, thanksgiving and submission to one another. How different the expression of the joy the Spirit produces and the expression of the joys of nature produced with wine. The joy of the Spirit comes out in singing what delights the heart of God. Psalms are evidently experimental compositions, in which we joy before God, because of His goodness to us in the circumstances through which He has brought us in His mercy. Hymns are paeans of praise in which we address God and tell Him and the Lord Jesus Christ of the thoughts and feelings of our hearts regarding the wonderful love made known to us, in which we respond to the grace so richly manifested in Jesus. Spiritual songs express our thoughts of the greatness, glory, and perfections of Christ; and tell out what we have felt of God's ways and counsels, as having learned from God, as taught by the Spirit. These precious compositions become the vehicle of expression from the heart, enabling us to speak to ourselves and to sing to the Lord in our joy and gladness. Then we are to give thanks at all times for all things to God the Father in the Name of our Lord

Jesus Christ. Only one filled with the Spirit could do this. When the Lord Jesus was rejected by Israel, and had to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, it is recorded of Him, "AT THAT TIME, Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father." In the moment of His greatest sorrow from Israel He answers with thanksgiving to the Father. The third mark of being filled with the Spirit is submission. Submission to evil is not in the apostle's mind for a moment, for evil has no place in the assembly of God. It is a matter of giving way in things which do not affect the conscience, the subjugation of one's private judgment to that of others in the interests of the things of Christ. No spiritual brother would submit to evil in the things of God, there is no question of submitting or compromising where the glory of God is concerned; we could not submit to evil in the fear of Christ. There are of course times when diversity of judgment arises as to how certain things should be dealt with in the assembly, which are serious enough, and where a spiritual brother may differ from his brethren; in such a case the same attitude should be adopted if the submission can be in the fear of Christ. It may be hard to submit, especially if one is confident of the correctness of his judgment, but one filled with the Spirit can leave his judgment with the Lord, to be vindicated in His good time. From Ephesians 5:22-33, Ephesians 6:1-4 we have the Family Circle, in which the features of the new man are to be manifested. Husband and wife is the closest and most intimate of natural relationships and therefore comes first. The normal Christian household is contemplated, where all acknowledge Jesus as Lord. Because the husband holds his headship and consequent authority in relation to the Lord, the wife is to submit herself unto her own husband as unto the Lord. God's wisdom has set the husband as head of the wife even as Christ is the Head of the church; so that even as the church is dependent upon Christ for guidance and supplies, the wife has been placed in dependence upon her husband for her resources and direction. It is not uncommon to find a wife with greater discernment, judgment, and mental ability than her husband, but this in no wise relieves her from the place of subjection, divinely given, even as the church has been subjected to Christ. How blessed to see the relationship of the church to Christ introduced to give force to the divine instructions for human relationships. Paul does not take us back to Eden to support his exhortations by what was then established, but rather lifts the subject into the realm of God's counsels, that the light of heaven might illumine and give colour to the common things of this life. And if he does go back to Eden, it is to show that Adam and Eve prefigured Christ and the church. Creation's light does display the beauty of the relationship of husband and wife, established by God, but how greatly the relationship is enhanced by the light of God's counsels.

If the wife is to be subject in everything to the husband as the church to Christ, Christ's love for the church is to be the character of the husband's affection for his wife; a love which took Him into death, a love which passeth knowledge. The husband is to love his wife with a love that would give himself, for Christ also loved the church and gave HIMSELF for it. Observe that when the love of Christ is presented "For me" (Galatians 2:20), "For us" (Ephesians 5:2), and here "For it," the measure of it is He "Gave Himself." Whether it is individual, collective, or corporate in its presentation, the love of Christ is infinite, unfathomable, unchangeable, and eternal. But the church has been secured by Christ's death that He might prepare her for companionship with Him in His glory, and that she might be worthy of His affections. Therefore has the church been set apart by Christ; and He purifies it by the washing of water by the word. Our blessed Lord cannot suffer defilement on that which is dear to Him, therefore with unwearied service He removes from the church every trace of contact with the defiled scene through which it passes. Only the word of

God can free the heart, mind, and spirit from the things around us; so that by the ministry of the word the Lord Jesus keeps our thoughts engaged with Himself and with the things that are above, where all is pure and holy.

All this is in view of the nuptial day when Christ shall present the assembly to Himself, glorious. What joy that day of presentation will bring to the heart of Christ and to the heart of His Bride! Like Him, she is glorious, with the glory in which God arrays her; nor is there a mark of impurity or imperfection upon her, not a trace of age or decay upon the beautiful companion of the glorious Christ of God. His moral features too are hers, for she is holy and blameless; Christ will have His wife even as the Father will have His sons, before Him in love, holy and blameless. This portion then shows what Christ has done for the church, what He is doing with it now, and what He is about to do with it in the coming day.

What an incentive all this is for the husband to love his wife; but there are further instructions, he is to love his wife as his own body, for the man who loves his wife loves himself. No man in his right mind ill-treats his body, but rather feeds and cares for it. Christ likewise nourishes the church with the richest supply of food from heaven, and cherishes it with His own perfect love, for we are united to Him, being members of His body, having come from Him. Eve was derived from Adam before she was united to him; and because of this a man is to leave father and mother and to be joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh. With the light of this chapter how wonderfully beautiful is God's presentation of the relationship of Adam and Eve; and what wisdom is displayed in secreting so early in the history of man His thoughts of Christ and the church. Adam and Eve though first upon the scene, set forth God's original thoughts, conceived in relation to His counsels before the world began. Though exulting in these great revelations we are not to forget that the husband is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to reverentially fear her husband. Here lies the true secret of matrimonial happiness, and it is because these Scriptural exhortations are not heeded that so much sorrow and distress are found in the homes of many.

Ephesians 6:1-24.

Following the divine instructions for husband and wife, and the precious revelation of the truth of the relation of the church to Christ, comes the exhortations to children and fathers. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord because it is the right thing to do; parental authority having been ordained of God from the beginning and commanded in the law. Obedience in the Lord supposes that no command from the parents is contrary to the Lord's will, but is rather the expression of His will for the child. We live in a day when honour to parents is not the rule in the world, and such a state emphasises the privilege belonging to the children of Christian households of adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in showing the honour becoming to parents. Under the law, a promise of well-being and long life accompanied this commandment; how much greater then will be the divine blessing, under grace, for those who obey. Fathers are to be watchful lest they provoke their children to anger. Much harm has been done to children by overbearing fathers enforcing their own wills and not the Lord's, and by rash and harsh judgments. Children require careful and prayerful handling, which casts the parents upon the Lord, that His discipline and admonition, with its wisdom, grace, and kindness might be ministered to them.

Under the conditions prevailing, when the epistle was written, the injunctions to bondmen and masters would belong, in the main, to the home circle. Because of the changed social conditions

today these instructions largely belong to the business circle. As in the previous relationships considered the subject vessel is first addressed, and obedience commanded. The wisdom of such a command must be evident to any one with the knowledge of the truth, or with experience in the world. Through disobedience man fell from his position and state of innocency and blessing in Eden; his blessedness in the Garden depended upon simple obedience to God's word, which indeed is the first principle of blessing for the creature at all times.

Under law obedience was demanded, but man proved himself incapable of keeping the law; under grace the Gospel is presented for the obedience of faith, which God provides; and the commandments of God for the Christian are the delight of the nature derived from God. Human relationships cannot possibly subsist in harmony if the subject vessel is not obedient, and the Christian servant is to obey with fear and trembling lest in anything by manifesting the spirit of disobedience he brings dishonour upon the Name of the Lord. Simplicity of heart in obedient service bespeaks undivided purpose of heart in serving under the eye of Christ. The man of the world works better when his master's eye is upon him and upon service readily seen, but the Christian, doing the will of God serves as well in the master's absence and in things unseen. Such service is from the soul, wrought ungrudgingly with good will as to the Lord, his heavenly Master, and not as unto men. Although the earthly master may not reward the good and diligent service rendered, the Lord will richly recompense the most menial task performed under His all-seeing eye. What an incentive this is to labour heartily in the ordinary duties of life! Here we read, "Whatever good each shall do, this he shall receive of the Lord." In Colossians the truth is complementary. "He that does a wrong shall receive the wrong he has done." It may be said that these injunctions were for slaves, and while this is true, the spirit of what is enjoined should surely characterise every believing servant.

Masters are to realise that the heavenly Master of their servants is their Master too, and their conduct should be ordered accordingly. If the Lord is going to repay good with good, they ought to do the same, for it is surely the privilege of the saint of God to follow in the steps of his Lord and Master. Nor should threats be used, for these are usually made in temper, and if not carried out authority is weakened. If threats are carried out to maintain authority, it is often to the hurt of both master and servant, so that it is better to maintain discipline by wiser methods than with threats. God has no respect for persons, so that whatever our position, whether master or servant, we are to keep this ever in mind. The man who heeds these exhortations will be the best master or the best servant.

We have been considering the features of the new man manifested in the public testimony (where the saint's relations with his neighbour are prominent), in the home circle, and in the business circle; now we are about to consider how the features of the new man are connected with the conflict into which we have been brought. If such is the order in which the truth is presented by the Holy Spirit, does it not suggest that we must be right in our relations in each of these circles before we can be found in the conflict according to God's will? A man who is not right with his brethren, his wife, his master or servants, because of his faults, cannot have the armour properly fitted. The new man is created in righteousness and holiness of truth, and righteousness and truth are parts of the divine armour. If practical righteousness is not manifested in the different circles in which God has placed us, and our conduct is not according to truth, the enemy will readily overcome us. Is it not in these circles that the armour of God is fitted, and we prepare ourselves for spiritual

conflict?

"Finally brethren" indicates that what we have considered leads to this climax; we are to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Of ourselves we are no match for the enemy, but the Lord has met and overcome him, and if we are strong in Him our very weakness will but make way for the only power that can defeat him. The might of His strength has been displayed in His going down into the domain of the enemy, in overcoming him, and in leading captivity captive. We have to meet a foe whose power has been broken, but who seeks to overcome us with his wiles. In the strength of Him who defeated the enemy, and with the whole armour of God on, we need not fear the foe. When Joshua met the man who was going to bring down Jericho, he learned that He was the Captain of the Lord's host; and so long as Joshua and Israel relied on Him they defeated the enemy; relying on themselves they fell an easy prey to a few men from Ai, and to the wiles of the Gibeonites. Our struggle is not with flesh and blood so that natural weapons will avail nothing; our foes are principalities and authorities, the universal lords of darkness, the spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenly places. Here are unveiled the great forces of evil that influence this world in its hateful opposition to all that is of God; powerful spiritual beings, wielding mighty diabolical influence over the minds and hearts of men. These have immense spheres of spiritual authority which have become alienated from God in their fall, authority used to oppose God and to thwart His designs for the blessing of men. From their heavenly spheres of rule they bring their darkening influence to bear on men whose hearts are filled with hatred against God, who become their willing instruments for opposition to God's testimony. Such is the moral darkness in which man is found, his mind blinded in wilful ignorance of God, the prey to wicked spirits, and pursuing a course that leads to eternal ruin. In the conflict this dreadful array of evil is against us: we meet the wicked spirits as we seek to enter into God's presence for communion with Him regarding the rich spiritual blessings He has given us in Christ in the heavenly places; we meet their human agents down here in seeking to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. If we compared the opposition of the forces of evil with our weakness we might well be dismayed, but in the presence of the Lord and the power of His might the great giants disappear.

Against such foes we must have the panoply of God if we are to withstand in the evil day in which our lot is cast, a day that will last till the conflict is over. First we must withstand the assault of the enemy, then there are the things to accomplish in the conflict for God, and having done all we are to stand in possession of what we have secured in the conflict. Like Shammah, one of David's mighty men, who stood in the midst of a plot of lentils and delivered it out of the enemy's hand. Shammah withstood the enemy, secured the plot, part of God's inheritance given to His people, and stood there in possession. There is no opportunity in this warfare for putting off our armour; our foes are wily and vigilant. If we are definitely set for the Lord's interests, the enemy will soon make his presence felt, and if we overcome him in the Lord's strength, we should watch against his seeking to regain from us the ground he has been forced to relinquish, or perhaps something else that we have held for God. Is it not through lack of watchfulness that we so often and so sadly fail? Flushed with success, there is the danger of endeavouring to stand in our own strength in the ground taken from the foe in the strength of the Lord, and thus expose ourselves to one for whom we are no match in ourselves. Standing is therefore the great thing for us, but we can only stand if we are properly equipped by God.

Now we have the parts of the panoply of God, in which we are to stand in the conflict. First of all the loins are to be girt about with truth; truth in the inward parts will regulate our whole course, and enable us to carry out God's will. Every inward spring of the moral being contributes to express what we really are; and unless all our desires, thoughts, and feelings, are affected by truth, yea protected by truth, the enemy will get a point for attack, and we cannot stand for God if we have wrong thoughts of God, or wrong feelings about Him, or if selfish desires and wrong motives control the life. Truth in the inward parts comes through communion with God, by feeding upon the word, which in communion the Spirit forms in us, giving that moral state which protects against the attacks of the enemy. The heart is the centre of the moral being, and it becomes us to be guarded against anything that would lower the moral tone of the life, which so largely depends on the condition of the seat of the affections.

Righteousness is to be our breastplate, protecting the heart as regards the conscience, for we must be right in our relations with God and with men to maintain a good conscience, if we would stand in the presence of the foe. Paul exercised himself to have a good conscience without offence in everything towards God and men, which surely means he always sought to have the breast protected with the breastplate of righteousness. A man with a bad conscience is of no use for meeting the enemy, for the enemy can readily engage such with his own failure and easily overthrow one whose heart condemns him. Will a man with a bad conscience seek to possess the portion in the heavenly places that God has given him in Christ, or endeavour to maintain the height of the calling wherewith God has called us? How very important it is therefore to allow nothing in the life that will affect the conscience, and so allow the enemy an unguarded spot for his fiery darts. Of wisdom, it was written of old, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." This is the path for the Christian: peace is to mark all his steps in the shoes brought to him by the Gospel. The Gospel not only brings good news of peace made by the blood of the cross, and of peace with God for those who are justified by faith, but exhorts us, if possible, to follow peace with all men. What a contrast this is to the ways of men naturally, of whom it is recorded, "The way of peace they have not known." How very often the word peace appears in the epistles. One of the marks of the kingdom of God is peace we have been called to peace in one body; and we are to seek peace and ensue it. Will a quarrelsome Christian, engaged in fleshly contentions, be able to meet the subtle foe? His fleshly contentions are no match for the enemy, and the state of heart of such a disposition leaves room for the inflamed darts of the wicked one. In Christianity nothing is to be done in the spirit of strife, but in the spirit of Him who was meek and lowly, whose every step was peace. The shield of faith brings God into every circumstance of life, and this defeats the purpose of Satan, who seeks to bring distrust of God into the heart as he did with Adam and Eve in the beginning. Could we possibly participate successfully in the conflict connected with God's will for our blessing without absolute confidence in God? Unflinching confidence in the might of Christ's strength and in the goodness of God will quench every inflamed dart the enemy can produce. Faith relies on Christ Who has already met and defeated the foe; bring Him in, and every wicked suggestion of the enemy is dispelled. When the spies brought to Israel the report of the land, of which they said, "Surely it floweth with milk and honey," they said also, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." They had not taken the shield of faith they forgot God; they were not strong in the Lord and the power of His might. But Joshua and Caleb were men of another sort; they had the shield of faith, and quenched the inflamed darts of the wicked one, saying, "If Jehovah delight in us, He will bring us into this

land, and give it us, a land that flows with milk and honey."

Protected by the helmet of salvation, the thoughts are engaged with what God has accomplished for us and will yet accomplish. The mind has a very important place in divine things, and has to be guarded against the enemy. In the quiet confidence and consciousness that the issue of the conflict is with God we can lift up the head in the presence of all evil, knowing that God has already given us part with Christ; He has blessed us in Christ, and soon will bring us home to heaven to be with Him and like Him for ever. Yet our helmet here is not the hope of salvation; it is the enjoyment of a salvation presently known, for even that which is in prospect is ours in spirit now. Ephesians presents God's counsels, and our blessings according to those counsels, as established in Christ already seated in the heavenly places. So that in Ephesians 2:1-22 where it twice says, "Ye are saved by grace," it observes between these two mentions, He "has raised us up together, and made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." What a salvation to engage the mind; our place is even now in Christ in the heavenly places. Thus engaged in mind, our thoughts are protected from the evil one, and we can go forward to occupy the divine ground for the glory of God and our own spiritual enrichment.

God's word is the sword of the Spirit, a weapon against which Satan has no defence. See how the Lord Jesus used this mighty sword when Satan confronted Him in the wilderness! Thrice did He say, "It is written;" and the wicked one left Him for a season. To use the sword of the Spirit, we must know the Scriptures; but there must also be the spiritual condition, through living communion with God to be able to use the sword aright. It is the Spirit's sword, therefore we must be under the Spirit's control to use it effectively. Satan sought to use the Scriptures against the Lord; he was not wielding the sword of the Spirit. We must therefore not assume that an answer from the Scriptures is always the sword of the Spirit: the word of God is living; the application of the living word is the sword of the Spirit.

Lastly there is prayer, which is a very important part of God's panoply for us. Lack of confidence and dependence upon God will surely expose us to the watchful foe. In the wilderness the Lord met Satan with the word, the sword of the Spirit; in Gethsemane, "being in conflict He prayed more earnestly." We are to use the word as the sword of the Spirit, and we are to pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit; the conflict is spiritual. Praying at all times is to be cultivated, for we are to watch unto this very thing with all perseverance; and we are to persevere both as regards going to prayer and while engaged in prayer, for the enemy seeks to keep us from the presence of God even when we are bowing the knee. Prayers are not to be narrow, but to embrace all saints; the whole sphere of God's operations on earth will be remembered by those intelligent regarding the scope of God's testimony. Paul, because of the special ministry committed to him, had a claim on the prayers of the saints; and his work among the saints at Ephesus emphasised this claim: but how gracious of him to desire their prayers, that they might partake with him of the privileges belonging to the sphere of Christ's interests. The apostle especially requested their prayers that he might be given utterance to announce with boldness what lay upon his heart, the mystery of the Gospel. This was Paul's unique ministry; he spoke of "My Gospel," for in his preaching there were revelations ministered only by him, preaching which presented the glory of God and the glory of Christ. Deeply embedded in the Gospel preached by Paul is this great mystery, (which was also his peculiar ministry) which disclosed the eternal secret of the heart of God in announcing rich, heavenly, and eternal blessings for the church in closest union with Christ. On account of

preaching this glorious truth, Paul, Christ's ambassador in this world, was bound with a chain. How very solemn for the world to treat thus the representative of the heavenly Christ, who held out to them nothing but divine blessing. Spite of his circumstances, the apostle wishes to be bold that he might speak becomingly of this wonderful theme.

Knowing the concern of the saints for him, and desiring that they might be encouraged, Paul graciously sent Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, to tell them all about him and his concerns. He then seeks for them peace with love and faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. On leaving His own, the Lord left them His peace; Paul would have the saints to enjoy this peace. All that we have is the sovereign gift of God, and comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. The final word invokes grace on all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption; the grace that will enable us to enter into the wonderful revelations given in this epistle, and to answer to the exhortations for the expression of the heavenly light in every circumstance down here. Wm. C. Reid.

S. Behold My Servant

"Behold My Servant"

Different servants of the Lord are so named in the Book of Isaiah. The prophet himself is so designated in Isaiah 20:3 Eliakim, David and Jacob are spoken of as God's servants (Isaiah 22:20; Isaiah 37:35; Isaiah 44:1), as is also Israel (Isaiah 41:8-9), and others (Isaiah 56:6, etc.). There is however One who is brought before us in this way, even He who, earlier in this prophecy, is called, "Wonderful, Counseller, The mighty God, The ever-lasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). We need the light of the New Testament to truly understand the significance of this great mystery, that the eternal Son of God became Man in order that He might be the Servant of the Godhead to accomplish all that lay in the eternal counsels of God for the glory of God and the blessing of men.

"My Servant . . . My Beloved" The first verse of Isaiah 42:1-25 is quoted in Matthew 12:18 as fulfilling that which had been written concerning Messiah so long before, and it is not difficult to understand why the Spirit of God should insert in Matthew "My beloved," for the Father had already addressed Him as such, and called the attention of others to it, when He came up out of the water at His baptism (Matthew 3:16-17). Only the beloved Son of God could accomplish the great work that was necessary to make God known, and to lay the basis in the cross for the accomplishment of His eternal purpose. How infinite the love, how lowly the mind, how unspeakable the grace, that caused the blessed Son of God to become a Servant for the pleasure of the Father and the eternal blessing of the creature.

Coming into Manhood, the Son of God was a real Man, and therefore required as Man to be upheld and supported in His place of dependence by God. As God's Servant He was His "elect," His chosen One for the great service to which He was called of God, as having put Himself at the disposal of God for His will. In this place of a Servant, Jesus was wholly delightful to His God and Father, for all that He was in Himself, in His relationship with the Father, and in the perfections manifested as accomplishing that which God had given Him to do. Everything was done by the Son that the Father desired, and wrought in the way that was required of Him, so that all that the Father is was made known in His perfect Servant.

There was nothing of independence seen in God's Servant; He was in everything obedient to God, and all that He did was by the Holy Spirit with which He was anointed. God said, "I have put my Spirit upon Him," and this was His seal of claiming Him for His service, but was also the mark of the deep pleasure He had in Him, and the expression of His confidence that He would perfectly finish the work with which He had entrusted Him. The Son of God was God's Servant to bring blessing to His people Israel, but this was by no means the full extent of His mission on earth, for through Him God "shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." This looks on to the second coming of the Lord, when, as Son of Man, all the kindreds of the earth will be blessed through the Seed of Abraham, according to God's promises to the patriarch.

There has been however, while awaiting the blessing of the nations on earth, the blessing that has come to the Gentiles who form part of the church of God, and this on account of the death of Christ, in relation to the purpose of God. On the way to the cross there was the earthly mission of Messiah to Israel with its offer of earthly blessing, but Messiah was refused, and as rejected by His people, there was the fulfilment of the words, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street" (Isaiah 42:2; Matthew 12:19), for the Lord, in meekness though with deepest sorrow, accepted His rejection, knowing that this would open the door to a greater service, even to the bringing in of heavenly blessing to a people destined to be with Him in heaven to share His place and joys there in the Father's house.

Yet, in the hour of His rejection by Israel, He would not come upon them in judgment. Israel was a bruised reed, but He would not break it; His earthly people, who ought to have been a flaming torch in testimony for God, had become a smoking flax which gave no light to the nations around, but rather beclouded them, yet He would not quench Israel. The time of judgment would come, but there would always be a remnant until the nation stood erect as a witness for God, a bright light for Him in the world to come. Then God would send forth "judgment unto victory" through Messiah. In that day, "in His Name shall the Gentiles trust," but as the Apostle Paul shows in Romans 15:12 there is now a fulfilment of this Scripture in the Gentiles who have believed the Gospel of their salvation.

It appeared as if the service of God's Servant towards Israel had failed, but Jehovah was able to say, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law" (Romans 15:4). Very soon it will be seen that in spite of Israel rejecting their Messiah, God has blessing for His earthly people, the basis His precious blood shed on the cross, and established in a new covenant that He will make with His people. Then too the isles of the Gentiles will be blessed under the reign of Israel's Messiah, the Son of Man.

"My Servant . . . In Whom I Will Be Glorified" When Jehovah said "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified" (Isaiah 49:3), He was speaking to Messiah, for in Him the history of Israel was taken up afresh for the glory of God. Whether seen as God's son (Exodus 4:22-23), as God's vine (Isaiah 5:1-30), or God's servant (Isaiah 49:1-26), the history of Israel begins anew in Messiah, who brings pleasure and glory to God in all that in which Israel brought sorrow to God and dishonoured His Name. The address of Isaiah 49:1-26 is not to Israel, for the Lord said, "Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; the Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of my Name" (Isaiah 49:1). Does not this show the interest of the Lord in the Gentiles? There are those among the nations that He desires to know the mind of Jehovah concerning Himself, His people Israel and the Gentiles. Although a divine Person, He would come as a Man into the world, from the womb of the virgin, and Named Jesus, Immanuel, God with us. As Man, in the service of God in this world, the Lord in spirit can say, "And He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword" (verse 2), for His word reached to the innermost recesses of heart and conscience while speaking on earth, bringing divine blessing to many, while stirring up the opposition of those who were opposed to God and His Son (See Hebrews 4:12-13). He also said, "in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me," for He was ever conscious of the protection of God while bitterly assailed by men under the influence of Satan. He was also "a polished shaft," whose word reached not only those where He was, but reached into the distance, even to us in this day, a weapon that brought down the power of the enemy, a secret

weapon that was hidden in the armoury of God, and that He brought forth to vanquish the foe in the time He had appointed.

God was confident that His Servant would secure His glory in all committed to Him, but as rejected by Israel it appeared as if His mission had failed, and although He knew well that it had not failed, yet His soul felt the rejection by Israel, and the apparent failure of His service on earth, so that He said, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God" (Isaiah 49:4). At the end of His path what was there to show for all His labours? He was left alone, betrayed by one of His disciples, denied by another, forsaken of all; crucified as a malefactor and assailed by the leaders of Israel, and mocked by the great of this world. In the midst of all this, as the Spirit of Christ looks forward to its fulfilment, He can say, "Surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." The place of the Son of God, God's Servant, at the right hand of the throne of God now, and the place that He shall fill in the day of His glory, shows the judgment of His God in relation to all He suffered in rejection. Not only the millennial day, but the eternal day, when not a vestige of evil will be found in the universe, but all in new creation, will show the results of the work that He wrought through His death, when He left all with His God.

Jesus as God's Servant had come to save His people Israel, but they would not have Him and so rejected their own mercies. God's answer to the rejection of His Son by Israel is, "It is a light thing that Thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). Not only would Messiah, rejected by Israel, be "glorious in the eyes of the Lord," but He would secure blessing to a far greater company than Israel, and His God would be His strength in achieving this great end.

What God's Servant came to accomplish for Israel would be achieved in God's good time, Israel would be regathered for the millennial day, the tribes of Jacob would be raised up, and the preserved of Israel be restored, but there would be something done among the Gentiles, both in the day in which we live, and also in the millennium, Christ being God's light for the Gentiles, and His salvation to the end of the earth. The mystery of Christ and the church is not revealed here, that awaited Christ taking His place on high and the coming of the Holy Spirit, but the preaching of Christ as God's light and salvation now is within the scope of this prophecy.

"My Servant . . . Exalted, Extolled . . . Very High"

Having manifested God's wisdom in His dealing prudently here below, God's Servant was "exalted and extolled" and made very high. In life and death He was shown to be the wisdom of God, and having glorified God on the earth, and having finished the work God gave Him to do, He was set down at God's right hand in heaven "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:20-21).

Many were astonished at the awful sufferings through which God's Servant passed, for "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men" (Isaiah 52:14). The two on the way to Emmaus were astonished that Messiah should so suffer, but the Lord said to them, "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke

24:26); and many others, like the disciples of the Lord, could not understand why Christ should thus suffer. A like astonishment will come to many nations when the kings of the earth shall be silent in His presence (Isaiah 52:15), realising in the day of Christ's glory that the One they see so glorious is none other than He whom men crucified and slew. On earth, the Servant of God was silent before the great of the earth, before the high priest, before Pilate and before Herod; in the coming day, the great of the earth, the kings will be silent before Him, the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

"My Righteous Servant"

Isaiah 53:1-12 presents to us the life, sufferings and glory of the Servant of God. It is written, "He shall see of the fruit the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall my righteous servant instruct many in righteousness; and He shall bear their iniquities." Isaiah 53:11. This has special reference to the many in Israel who, in the coming day, will be blessed in association with the Messiah on earth. He will instruct them in righteousness, and as the true sin offering bear their iniquities. Already their iniquities have been borne by Christ in His death, and when the remnant of Israel gaze upon Him whom they pierced, they will be able to say, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5). This is the One who, by telling them of what He did for them on the cross, will instruct them in righteousness, even as we have already been instructed in righteousness by the Epistle to the Romans.

"He Shall Serve Him For Ever"

Having come into the world in the service of God, the Son of God has become a Servant for ever, answering perfectly to the type of the Hebrew servant in Exodus 21:2-6. Love to His Master, to His God and Father, love to His wife, for "Christ also loved the church" (Ephesians 5:25), and love for His children for He could say, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me" (Hebrews 2:13), caused the Son of God to go to the place where He was pierced (Exodus 21:6), and so have the objects of His affections ever with Him. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 we learn that the Son of God will reign "till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25), and having done so the end will come, "when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power," and then He shall deliver up the kingdom to Him who is God and Father (1 Corinthians 15:24). When this is done, "The Son also shall Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28). While retaining for ever His place in the Godhead, when God is all in all, the Son also, in wondrous grace, remains a Servant to the Godhead for ever, delighting in His Master, and rejoicing in the objects of His love secured by His death on the cross.

What lowly grace marked the Lord Jesus. When the disciples were striving as to which should be "accounted the greatest," He said to them, "I am among you as He that serveth" (Luke 22:27), and almost immediately He laid aside His garments, girded Himself with a linen towel, poured water into a basin, and stooped to wash the feet of His disciples (John 13:3-5). Nor has the Lord's service to His own ceased by His entry into heaven, for He still cares for those He loves (Ephesians 5:26), and in the coming day "He shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them," just as He served His own when risen from the dead (Luke 12:37; John 21:13).

How very wonderful it is that the glorious Son of God, so great in His Person, should come to be a Servant to God as Man in this world, should choose to remain a Servant to the Godhead for ever, because of His great love for the Father and for His own, and that that blessed One should also stoop to serve those He loves.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Burden of the Valley of Vision

Burden of the Valley of Vision

Most of the burdens of Isaiah are prophecies concerning God's judgments on the nations, but the burden of the Valley of Vision has to do with Israel, and especially Jerusalem. Four chapters earlier there had been another prophecy concerning Israel, the earlier part, it would seem, having been fulfilled in our days, with the return to the land of Palestine of the Israelis as a distinct nation. God's government will yet over-take those who have returned, even as it is written, "He shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches" (Isaiah 18:5). But the last verse shows the people restored to the land by the Lord in His goodness. The Captives of Jerusalem The opening verses of Isaiah 22:1-25 foretell God's judgment on Jerusalem, a city that had been characterized by activity, excitement and joy. Now there is anxiety. Those who have escaped death are upon the housetops, witnessing the awful carnage and sorrow. The rulers, who had fled from the city, had been captured and bound, and those who had sought refuge in the city from other parts are also found in bonds. No doubt there has been a partial fulfilment of this prophecy already, perhaps more than one, but the complete fulfilment appears to await the last days. It may be that this is another view of what is given in Zechariah 14:2, "and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled . . . and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." The Prophet's Distress The prophet, in whom is seen the spirit of the godly remnant of Israel, weeps bitterly and refuses to be comforted, because of the trouble that has overtaken the nation. If the nation do not understand that it is the Lord's judgment, the remnant do, and acknowledge it. The enemy breaks down the walls, but instead of crying to God for His help, there is crying to the mountains. The mountains may speak in a typical way of the great nations, from whom Israel will seek help.

Elam, which is Persia, and Kir, which may be Assyria or Moab, are numbered among the combatants in this conflict. Isaiah 22:7 clearly shows the prophetic character of the passage, for it says, "And it shall come to pass, that thy choicest valleys shall be full of chariots and the horsemen shall set themselves in array at the gate." This is very much on the line of the Scripture already referred to in Zechariah 14:1-21, "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle."

Israel's Expedients

Instead of seeking the aid of the Lord in the time of trouble, Israel seeks "the armour of the house of the forest," relying on natural resources for deliverance. Different devices were resorted to for defence of the city; they "gathered together the waters of the lower pool," evidently to keep the enemy out; and they broke down the houses of the city to "fortify the wall" (Isaiah 22:8-10). There was abundance of energy, for they "made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool," but the one thing they should have done they did not do, for the prophet said, "but ye have not looked unto the Maker thereof, neither had respect unto Him that fashioned it long ago" (Isaiah 22:11). The Lord was not indifferent to Israel's plight, for He called "to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth." Jehovah desired that His people should

feel the gravity of their departure from Him, and return to Him in true sorrow and repentance. This, no doubt, was the state of Israel, many a time in the past, and it will be so again just before the final judgment falls upon the guilty city.

We see the heart of the natural man exposed in Israel, for they hid their eyes from the gravity of their state, and gave themselves up to feasting and merriment, saying, "let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die" (Isaiah 22:13). It was utter disregard for the pleadings of their God, and reckless abandonment to the pleasures of the world with death before them. Having thus refused to listen to God, is it any wonder that He should say, "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts" (Isaiah 22:14). The language of Zechariah regarding this is, "And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein" (Zechariah 13:8). God will not be unmindful of the faithful remnant when He comes upon the ungodly in judgment.

Shebna the Treasurer The introduction of Shebna here is evidently to portray the character of those in leading positions in Israel who, without any thought of God, care only for themselves. Shebna was actually one of king Hezekiah's chief ministers, but his conduct was objectionable to God, being in marked contrast to what a servant of Jehovah should be. Instead of caring for the interests of the Lord among His people, he had the glory of his own name before him. Not content with making a name for himself while in this life, he had hewn "him out a sepulchre on high" as one that "graveth an habitation for himself in a rock" (Isaiah 22:16). Shebna desired present glory, and a name with posterity, for the glory of the God of Israel had no place in his thoughts or ways, and he dimly foreshadowed the antichrist, who will indeed seek his own glory, and even use his position in Israel, to which he has exalted himself, to sit down in the temple of God, "showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

God's word to Shebna was a solemn one, "Behold, the Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee. He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country; there shalt thou die; and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house. And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he pull thee down" (Isaiah 22:17-19). Although there is no record of what happened to Shebna, we can depend upon it that all was carried out to the letter.

There can be little doubt that this prophecy has in mind a man who will fill a higher place in Israel than Shebna, and his judgment will be even more violent and devastating, for it is written concerning him, "whose coming is after the working of Satan," and "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8-9). Again, of this person, the antichrist, and his companion the beast, the head of the revived Roman empire, it is written, "These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Revelation 19:20). This latter Shebna will indeed be tossed violently into a large place, and he will be covered there in a mighty captivity.

God's Servant Eliakim

God's judgment on the pride and arrogance of Shebna would make way for a true servant of Jehovah, even as it is written, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah: and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle,

and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah" (Isaiah 22:20-21). It is to be remarked that while Shebna is spoken of as being "over the house" in Isaiah 22:15, in Isaiah 36:3; Isaiah 36:22, and Isaiah 37:2, Eliakim is presented as "over the house," and Shebna is mentioned after him as "the scribe." So that during the reign of Hezekiah, Eliakim was exalted. and Shebna was falling from his very high position. Who can doubt that Eliakim is here a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who shall be seen as "exalted, and extolled, and very high," after antichrist has been cast into the lake of fire? The robe and the girdle that truly belonged to God's Christ had been assumed by antichrist, the man of sin, the false king; but on his expulsion, and judgment, the true King will take up the robe and the girdle that are His by right, and He will be "over the house," as He is even now. "Son over God's house," and in that day "He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah."

What is written in Isaiah 22:22 has very evidently Christ in view, even as it is written of the Son of God in Revelation 3:7, "He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David . . ." As having the key of the house of David, we see the Lord Jesus in control of all pertaining to Israel, the government of all belonging to Him as Israel's King resting on His shoulder. Having the key of David would rather refer to the Lord's present authority at God's right hand, the place from which He controls all, though not publicly, for the good of His people. Whether in regard to the present, or the coming day, the Lord Jesus has all authority and power to open or close doors as He wills. The Nail in the Sure Place The Spirit of God surely passes beyond what was true of the faithful Eliakim when He writes, "And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house" (Isaiah 22:23). Who but Christ could answer properly to this description? Christ is the only One upon whom anything for God can rest securely, the only One who, in Himself, is thoroughly reliable; He is "the True". The sure place may contemplate Christ in resurrection, the Spirit of God presenting Him first of all in the place He will occupy in glory before viewing Him entering into death.

It is as risen from the dead, and returned from His Father's throne to this world, that Christ will be for a glorious throne to Israel. And it will be in that day "they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons" (Isaiah 22:24). All the earthly glory that belonged to Jesus as Son of David, that which was refused to Him when He came the first time, will be gladly accorded Him in the day of His glory.

Everything and everyone in Israel will rely on Him in the day of His glory, and all will be sure of His interest in them, from the least to the greatest. It will surely rejoice the hearts of His people to see Him bearing the glory; but they will also see that the One who condescends to bear the glory of the throne of Israel is no other than the One who has the glory of the Father, the glory of the holy angels, and the glory of the Son of Man (Luke 9:26). In vision, the prophet now turns to the rejection and death of Him who is the Nail in the sure place, even as he turns abruptly from the glory to the sufferings, and from the sufferings to the glory in Isaiah 52:13-15, and Isaiah 53:10. Christ was "removed" from the place that was truly His, He was "cut down," yea, "cut off" in the midst of His days; and all Israel's glory departed with Him, not to be seen again till His return. The Lord said in John 6:39, "And this is the will of Him that hath sent me, that of all that He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up in the last day." All that fell with the nail in the sure

place will indeed be raised up again, He will raise it up when He comes forth in triumph and glory. Nothing will be lost of all that the Father has given Him, whether heavenly or earthly.

Wm. C. Reid.

Once on Calvary dishonoured, Mocked by all the powers of hell; On the holy Mount exalted Hail, O King of Israel!

Set in majesty on Zion, Every land shall hear Thy fame, Thine the kingdom, Judah's Lion!

Every tribe shall praise Thy Name!

S. Christian Fellowship

Christian Fellowship

There are two leading thoughts concerned with fellowship, the first, partnership, and the second, communion. When we think of fellowship with each other our minds take in both thoughts, but when we speak of fellowship with God it is communion that we think of. In the New Testament there are a number of passages of Scripture that bring the subject of fellowship before us, and the consideration of some of these should give us God's thoughts on the matter. The Apostles' Fellowship On the day of Pentecost about three thousand souls accepted the word preached by the apostles, and were baptized. In their baptism they separated themselves from the generation that had crucified and slain the Lord Jesus, and acknowledged that the One who had been rejected by the leaders of the nation was the promised Messiah. God had raised Jesus from the dead, and made Him Lord and Christ, His new place at God's right hand as His anointed being God's answer to man's rejection, and the expression of God's pleasure in what He had done.

Those who believed "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread and prayers" (Acts 2:42). Their fellowship was founded on the apostles' doctrine, the teaching concerning a dead and risen Christ, now glorified in heaven; and much of their fellowship would be in the breaking of bread, which was the memorial of the Lord Jesus, and in prayer to Him whom they now acknowledged as their Lord and Master.

They had not been attracted by the promise of any material prosperity, and the fellowship into which their acceptance of the Gospel had brought them held out no earthly prospects, but rather placed them where they would be subjected to the assaults of the enemy, who had used the leaders of Israel to slay their Master. There was much to enjoy together of Christian fellowship, communion in the things concerning Christ, speaking together of the truths ministered by the apostles, which no doubt brought out what Jesus had spoken to them while on earth, and what had been written in the Old Testament concerning Him. The Fellowship of God's Son In the beginning of the Acts only Jews had been brought to God, but soon the word reached out to the Gentiles, and a number of gatherings had been formed by the labours of the Apostle Paul. At Corinth there were many believers, and writing to them the Apostle said, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9). This is the fellowship into which all Christians have been called, for the epistle is sent to all, even as it is written in 1 Corinthians 1:2, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth . . . with all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." And this is the only fellowship into which God has called Christians.

We have not chosen this fellowship for ourselves, God in His grace has called us into it, and every true Christian, who has believed in the Lord Jesus and has received the Holy Spirit belongs to this circle of fellowship. The bond that binds us together in this fellowship is the Son of God, the One to whom we owe everything. In 1 Corinthians 10:16, the death of Christ is given as the basis of our fellowship, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"

The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" At the Lord's supper we enjoy the precious privileges that belong to this fellowship, when we remember the Lord, and show forth His death until He comes. There are three circles of fellowship to which the Apostle calls our attention in 1 Corinthians 10:18-21 : the fellowship of Israel after the flesh, the fellowship of demons, and the fellowship of the Lord's table. Those who presented peace offerings in Israel gave the fat and blood to Jehovah, and ate with their friends what was left, after Jehovah and the priests had their portions. The sacrifices of the heathen to idols were to demons, and those who offered and ate of the sacrifices had fellowship with demons.

Christians, who partook of the Lord's supper, were partaking of the privileges of the Lord's table, which represented all the wide range of blessings and privileges belonging to the Christian circle. There are responsibilities, however, as well as blessings and privileges, and every Christian who has been called into the fellowship of God's Son is under obligation to walk in consistency with the death of Christ in all his ways. No Fellowship of Light with Darkness

Fellowship with devils is utterly incongruous with Christian fellowship, even as Paul had written in 1 Corinthians 10:21, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partaker of the Lord's table, and the table of devils." No one who is associated with heathen temples has a right to be at the Lord's table. In this chapter the apostle is considering religious fellowships, but in 2 Corinthians 6:1-18 many other associations are thought of. When Paul wrote, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," he was not writing only of religious associations. The Christians ought not to be found in any voluntary association that is inconsistent with Christian fellowship. We have been united together as Christians in one body, and this is not a voluntary association, but a vital unity formed by the Holy Spirit, and Christian fellowship is to be governed by this. Unbelievers have no part in the unity of the body, and no part in Christian fellowship.

Unbelievers are unrighteous before God. Many may be good men and righteous by human standards, but if outside of Christ they are unrighteous in the sight of God, and there cannot be any true fellowship between those who are Christians and those who are not. Believers have been "made the righteousness of God" in Christ, and this has put them in an entirely new place before God, and is to govern their relations with others in this world.

If a believer is united in marriage to an unbeliever there are divine instructions to govern their relationships, as in 1 Corinthians 7:12-14, where the unbeliever is viewed as sanctified in the believer, and the children as holy before God. The Apostle Peter also in 1 Peter 3:1, exhorts the believing wife so to act as to gain her husband. We have to meet unbelievers in all kinds of ways in this world, and to bear testimony to Christ before them, even at a feast, if we are disposed to go (1 Corinthians 10:27). With light and darkness there is nothing in common, and those who have been enlightened with the knowledge of God cannot have partnerships with those in the darkness of ignorance of God. They have nothing in common to converse over; all they have in common is the flesh, and the Christian has crucified the flesh with the passions thereof. All worldly associations are for the improvement of man in the flesh, for the advancement of present interests, or for the gratification of the flesh. In the religious world there is no agreement with the Christian who is faithful to God, although they would feign draw the believer into association with them; but Scripture says, "What concord hath Christ with Belial? and what agreement hath the temple of

God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Those who value the Name of Christ cannot go on with those who worship the worthless gods of this world, and who have no regard for the Christ whom we adore. Christians are the temple of the living God, who dwells in them. How then can they be associated in any way with the idolatry of this world?

Separation from every worldly association is involved in the divine call, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." God has called us out from all that is unholy, from all that is inconsistent with Himself, that we might be wholly for Himself and for His will. Once believers belonged to the religious, political, social and other worldly circles of fellowship, but the call of God, and the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, has put us outside of them all, and God would have us realise that this is a real and practical separation. For the early saints, and in some degree for those in Christendom, separation from the world entails opposition, and perhaps persecution. Therefore we have the divine promise, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The sense of this blessed relationship will sustain us whatever we have to face as walking the path of separation in obedience to the will and call of the Lord.

Fellowship with the Gospel

Paul had good cause for thanking God upon every remembrance of the saints at Philippi, and his prayers for them were always with joy for their "fellowship in the Gospel from the first day" until the time of his writing the epistle. Paul would never forget how Lydia had received him and his companions into her house, after she had heard and believed the Gospel. It was not simply fellowship with Paul, but with the Gospel which had brought to her the glad tidings of the grace of God. The fellowship of the Philippian saints had been very practical, for Paul was able to write to them, "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity" (Php 4:15-16). Having received the blessings of the Gospel, the saints at Philippi sought to further the Gospel in helping the servants of the Lord in every way. The Apostle counted on their prayers, even as he wrote, "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ" (Php 1:19).

Fellowship of the Spirit

Before exhorting the saints to unity, Paul wrote to the Philippian saints, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit" (Php 2:1). True Christian fellowship is "fellowship of the Spirit." In the Christian circle the motives that control our actions lie in the divine nature, and the Spirit of God gives character and power to all true fellowship. In the world fellowship is governed by similarity of outlook, and mutual interest; but in the assembly of God the Spirit of God binds the saints of God together, and enables them to express their feelings and desires towards one another in a way that gives pleasure to God. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit is also referred to by Paul in the closing words of 2 Corinthians, where he writes, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." Grace, love and fellowship belong only to one circle on earth, a circle in which the whole Trinity is interested, and for which it cares; the circle that has been formed by the Spirit, through

the work of the Son, for the pleasure and worship of the Father.

Fellowship with God When the Apostle John wrote, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us" (1 John 1:3), he was not writing concerning ecclesiastical fellowship, as Paul does in 1 Corinthians, but the fellowship that belongs to the family of God as having the knowledge of God, and as having the eternal life that was manifested in the Son of God in Manhood. First, the Apostle desires that all believers might have fellowship with the servants of the Lord who brought the truth, and communion with the Father and the Son in the enjoyment of it. At the beginning, those who believed continued in the Apostles' fellowship; and for us this is in relation to the full knowledge and revelation of God in Jesus. It is true that the Apostles had a special place in fellowship with the Father and the Son, as sent by the Son to make the truth known, but we also have our part in praising the Son before the Father, and in speaking to the Son about the Father. But, at all times, wherever we meet a true believer, we can speak together of what has been made known to us in the Person of the Son. In this divine fellowship the Apostle desires that our joy may be full. What can bring joy to our hearts like speaking together of all that we have found in Jesus.

Christian fellowship belongs to those who walk in the light; and every one who has the knowledge of God walks in the light. We may not always walk according to the light, but from the moment the light of God entered our souls, we walked in the knowledge of God. There are many professors of Christianity who say they have fellowship with God, and it is the attitude of every professor; but if they walk in this world without the knowledge of God in their souls they walk in darkness, and "lie, and do not the truth."

Fellowship with the Truth The elect lady was warned by the Apostle John not to receive into her house, or even to bid God speed to any who did not bring the doctrine of Christ (2 John 1:10), for any who had the least fellowship with such was a "partaker of his evil deeds." Firmness and courage might be needed to act as commanded of God, but lack of faithfulness could bring damage to the saints of God. Fellowship with evil is viewed very seriously in Scripture. To Gaius, John writes of his entertaining the servants of the Lord who were strangers, who "for His Name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles" (3 John 1:5-7). In receiving such, those who received them were "fellow-helpers to the truth," which these faithful servants of the Lord brought. These two short epistles then clearly bring out that to have fellowship with one who brings evil doctrine is to have fellowship with evil, but to have fellowship with those who bring the truth is to have fellowship with the truth.

Fellowship in the Last Days When the Holy Spirit came from the ascended Christ, and three thousand souls were brought into blessing through the preaching of the apostles, there was remarkable unity among the saints of God, although the teaching of the unity of the body of Christ had not yet been ministered, for they "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers"; and "they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people" (Acts 2:42; Acts 2:46-47). Fellowship in those early days was most precious, the teaching of the apostles concerning the risen and glorified Christ, who had lately been crucified and slain in Jerusalem, having been received by faith in the heart, and Christ Himself was ever before them in the breaking of bread, and their resource to

whom they looked in prayer. This delightful unity and blessedness did not last long, for a watchful enemy brought in murmuring and dissension, and the flesh desiring for itself the credit that be-longed to true devotion to the Lord brought upon itself in Ananias and Sapphira the unsparing judgment of God. Judgment began at the house of God, for all had to learn that there were not only privileges connected with Christian fellowship, but also the responsibility of maintaining what was due to God in righteousness, holiness, and truth. With the call of the Apostle Paul to the double ministry of the Gospel and the church, the truth of the unity of the body of Christ was made known, and the truth of the fellowship of God's Son into which all Christians are called (1 Corinthians 1:9). Men have formed many circles of fellowship, even among saints of God or those who profess to be saints of God; but there is only one fellowship into which God has called His saints, and that is the "fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." Because of this, we are in duty bound to refuse to belong to any other fellowship than that to which God has called us. The fellowship of God's Son has Christ Himself as the bond of His people, and Christ as the object of our hearts and activities, and God does not recognise any other fellowship for His people. Before being called of God, the converted Jews had their fellowship in the Jewish religion, which centred in the temple and the altar; and the converted Gentiles had in heathenism their fellowship with demons in their idolatrous sacrifices; now all was different, the Jewish religion had been set aside in the cross of Christ, and the converted heathen had been separated by the cross from all that had previously engaged him; and together, the converted Jew and Gentile found their fellowship in the things of God, in which Christ was the centre and object, and where the Name of Christ was upon them. The foundation of Christian fellowship is the death of Christ, for "the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). In this fellowship, "we being many are one bread, one body; for we all partake of that one bread." All who, by the work of the Spirit of God, have part in the one body, the body of Christ, are not only brought into the blessings and privileges of Christianity, but they are under obligation to walk in consistency with the death of Christ.

How infinitely great are the blessings into which God, in His grace has brought us! In the spirit of the new covenant we have the forgiveness of sins, and the knowledge of God; and for us the new covenant is a "ministry of righteousness," and a "ministry of the Spirit." Already we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, knowing the relationship of sons to God, and being accepted in the Beloved. Soon we shall have our part in the divine inheritance that is Christ's, but already we are the heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

Only those who have believed the Gospel of our salvation regarding the atoning work of Christ, and His resurrection, have the blessings of Christianity, and only they are entitled to the privileges of the fellowship of God's Son. We are living in a day when there is a great profession of Christianity, when many who know not the Lord partake of His Supper, but they have no title to this privilege if they are not sheltering beneath the blood of the true Paschal Lamb. In the assembly of God we partake of the precious privileges that belong to the body of Christ. There we worship by the Spirit of God; there we sing our praises to the Father and the Son; there we pray in divine liberty, and there we have the ministry provided by God for the comfort, edification and encouragement of His people. In the assembly the members of the one body function under the control of the Spirit of God, and under the direction of the Lord, for the pleasure and glory of God,

and for the joy and delight of His saints. Our individual walk must answer to the mind of God, and any who compromise the holiness or righteousness of God become subject to divine discipline, exercised by the assembly on behalf of the Lord. The assembly has also the authority of God to loose as well as to bind, and all discipline has in mind the restoration of the offender when there is self-judgment and repentance. We cannot have the joys of Christian fellowship if the honour of the Lord's Name is not safeguarded from every kind of evil. Only those who are Christ's ought to be at the Lord's Table, and only those free from complicity in evil dishonouring to the Lord.

Paul had warned the elders of Ephesus that grievous wolves would enter in among them after his departure, not sparing the flock, and from among themselves men would rise up, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:1-38). In 2nd Timothy, the Apostle warns of the vain babblings that would increase "unto more ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a canker; of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus." The Apostle did not look for increased fidelity among professing Christians, but rather for declension, which had already set in. "All they . . . in Asia" had turned away from him who had brought to them the rich blessings of the Gospel. They had not given up the truth of Christianity, but had not cared to be any longer associated with one who was bound with a chain for the testimony of the Lord. The faith of some had been overthrown by the teachings of Hymenaeus and Philetus, and those who named the Name of the Lord are called upon to depart from iniquity. It is no longer only from the corruptions of heathendom that Christians are to be apart, as the Apostle had instructed the Corinthian saints, we are to be separate from the corruptions of that which professes Christ's Name as well. Nor is it simply moral corruption that we are to be separate from, but as here, doctrinal corruption, that which is a perversion of the truth of God.

God's house is no longer viewed as "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15), but as "a great house" in which there are vessels of dishonour as well as the vessels to honour. We are not called upon to separate from the great house, for then we should have to give up the profession of Christianity, but we are to be separate from the vessels of dishonour. Loyalty to Christ demands that we should not be associated with anything or anyone that compromises the Name of the Lord. The call here is to the individual, for the apostle, by the Spirit, views the corporate testimony as ruined. It is irretrievably ruined, for there is not a call to get back to the unity that marked the church at the beginning, but for the individual to be true to Christ's Name in purging himself from all that is dishonouring to Him. Association with evil defiles, as is seen in this and in other Scriptures, and we must be free from evil associations if we are to be vessels of honour, and fit for the Master's use.

Having freed ourselves from the evil associations of the religious world, God does not wish us to be independent of other Christians; but, fleeing every desire of the flesh, we are to follow "righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). We may be isolated in our faithfulness, but we are not to be independent. There are others who have heard the call to separation, and have acted on it; and we are to walk with them in the path of God's will.

We are not called upon to form something new, or to do anything different from what had been enjoined on the Christian company before the church was in ruins. Righteousness, faith, love and peace are some of the marks of the divine nature working in the Christian, so that we are to go on

together as Christians, manifesting together the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). God has not left us without instruction, and the light of "All Scripture" is available for us. No enlightened Christian will deny that we are in the "last days" of which the Apostle forewarns Timothy and ourselves in the beginning of chapter 3 of his second epistle to his son in the faith; and in the midst of the conditions described by the Spirit of God, we are cast upon the same resources that were available to Timothy. First, the Apostle writes, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life . . ." Paul's doctrine is still available for us, and in our gatherings we have this divine teaching to guide us. The truth of the assembly has not been set aside because of the failure of the church, it remains for the guidance of all who desire to be true to Christ. Two or three who gather together in the Name of Christ, have this wealth of divine teaching for their direction in their gatherings. We cannot claim to be the assembly in any locality in this day of ruin, but we can claim the Scriptures as our guide for our assembly gatherings. We have nothing else to direct us, and desire nothing else. All improvisation of men is to be refused because we have the light of God in the Scriptures. No amount of failure can relieve us from following the mind of God for His saints in their gatherings. The Second Epistle to Timothy does not set aside the instructions of 1st Corinthians; it is supplementary to it because of the failure of the church, but it is also complementary to it, as showing what should be our guide in the days of brokenness and ruin. Indeed, all that Paul has written, in all his epistles, remains for our instruction, to guide us in our individual life, and also as gathering together in our weakness in these last days. The ship may be broken in pieces (Acts 27:1-44), and we may be only twos and threes on broken pieces of the ship, making for the land, but we still have the privileges that belonged to the assembly at the beginning, and we still are responsible to act according to the light of God's word, and to safeguard the holy Name of the Lord in our gatherings, for it is to His Name that we gather.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. David's Last Words and Mighty Men.

David's Last Words and Mighty Men.

(Notes of an address.) 2 Samuel 23:1-39.

I thought that we might consider together tonight something of the truth of the kingdom. No doubt we all know that there are different aspects of kingdom truth: the Lord Jesus went throughout the villages and cities of Palestine preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom of God; He foretold that the gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world in the coming day, and instructed His disciples in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. When the Apostle Paul addressed the elders of Ephesus, he spoke of having testified to Jews and Greeks "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," and of his testimony regarding "the gospel of the grace of God." He had not shunned to declare "all the counsel of God," but he had also gone about "preaching the kingdom of God." The truth of the kingdom is brought out very touchingly in the last words of David, and also in the exploits of David's mighty men. David describes the character of God's king, and the blessedness of His kingdom; the deeds of the mighty men serve to illustrate what should mark the saints of God in this present day, who have been privileged to stand for God in the conflict of good and evil, as knowing the truth of God, and as being prepared to maintain it at all costs. This chapter has therefore some very valuable lessons for us.

David was just about to pass away from this world, and his last words present the vision that was before him; what God enabled him to see of the coming kingdom of Christ. First of all David speaks of what he was naturally, "The son of Jesse" — of very humble origin, then extols the grace of God that made him "The man who was raised up on high." The Lord Jesus was of the same line, as becoming Man, but "He made Himself of no reputation;" and because of this "God also highly exalted Him." Moreover David could speak of himself as "The anointed of the God of Jacob," a vessel set apart by God to fulfil all His will regarding His earthly people, and to typify our blessed Lord Who, as exalted to the right hand of God, is anointed to fill the whole universe with His glory and divine blessing. As the "Sweet psalmist of Israel" David was the leader of the praises of Israel to Jehovah (1 Chronicles 25:6), even as the Lord Jesus leads the praises to the Father now, in the midst of the church (Hebrews 2:12).

(It is very interesting to see that what marked David also marks the saints today. Of low degree by nature, as descended from Adam, in all our sins, without one pulsation of heart Godward, we can think of ourselves as vessels of sovereign mercy and divine grace: we have been quickened, and raised up together, and made to sit in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. We have been anointed of God, having received the Spirit of Christ, and we can sing the praises of God in the company, and under the leading of the Lord Jesus.)

What David said did not proceed from his own heart or mind; he was the vessel of the Spirit of the LORD; this is what is called inspiration, and what we read of in 1 Corinthians 2:13, "Which also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit." David was the

speaker, but God's word was in his tongue. What he spoke under the guidance and control of the Spirit of God was what God had communicated to him; this is revelation. This also we have in 1 Corinthians 2:1-16, "We speak God's wisdom in a mystery, — Things which eye hath not seen God has revealed to us by His Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:6-10). The youngest child of God can rest with assurance on the truth of the Scriptures, for not only do they give us God's revelation, but they have come to us inspired by the Holy Spirit, in words that He has chosen. The God of Israel, Who had cared for His people from the beginning; the Rock of Israel, Who remained steadfast to all His promises, spoke to David, revealed His mind and will to him, so that by the Spirit he could communicate it to His people.

Now we have the special revelation which, given as David's last words, must be of great significance: "The ruler among men shall be just, Ruling in the fear of God." Although there never has yet been a king in this world that perfectly answered to this divine requirement, there is coming a day when the Lord Jesus shall be manifested as God's king, and these features will be found in their perfection in Him. Isaiah's prophecies, and David's last words shall be fulfilled, for, "A king shall reign in righteousness; and "the spirit — of the fear of the LORD" shall rest upon Him (Isaiah 32:1; Isaiah 11:2). What rich blessing will flow out to men when the Lord Jesus rules in this world! Some earthly rulers have sought to be just, and to rule with the fear of God before them and under such rulers men have been blessed; but only the Lord Jesus answers perfectly to this.

Christ's reign shall be "As the light of the morning, like the rising of the sun. A morning without clouds." What divine light shall come to this poor earth after the awful judgments that are necessary to prepare the way for Christ's kingdom. The darkness that has been introduced by Satan, and that fell upon men through his agents, the beast and the antichrist, shall pass away, and instead there shall be the light of a new day, the day of Christ. As the Sun of Righteousness, the light of Christ's glory shall shine to the limits of the world, bringing joy, refreshment and blessing to all mankind. Many a cloud has obscured the light in the kingdoms of pious men, such as David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Joash, and others, but never a cloud shall hinder the shining of the heavenly light that shall radiate from Christ, through the church, in the millennium. As a result of Christ's rule, blessing and prosperity will fill the earth, even as we read, "From the sunshine, after rain, the green grass springeth from the earth." The dreadful wars that have ravaged the earth have for long prevented prosperity in the world, but all will be altered when Christ maketh wars to cease to the end of the earth, and when God's blessing brings true prosperity.

Although David was a man after God's heart, he has to confess the sad failure of his house, saying, "Although my house be not so before God." Righteousness and the fear of Jehovah had not marked his dealings with Uriah the Hittite, and because of this, in the government of God, dreadful things happened in David's house; clouds overcast the scene once filled with glory, the light was hidden behind the clouds, and prosperity declined. How many of God's saints have to say with David, "My house (is) not so with God." Yet, spite of his failure, God remains faithful to His word, and on this David relies. God's covenant with him was everlasting: it was ordered in every way, and sure. This covenant did not rest on the faithfulness of David, but on God's purpose regarding Christ. It is in Christ that everything promised shall be fulfilled; all is sure because it is in Christ risen from the dead that all spoken of here shall find its answer. David found his salvation — all his salvation — in what God had promised regarding Christ; and all his heart's desires too are satisfied in God's king, the Lord Jesus Christ. But all that was promised did not then appear before

David's eyes, except in vision; God did not then make it grow. It was not to be realised in Solomon, who was about to be placed on the throne by David, although he would be a type of Christ in the splendour and glory of the coming kingdom; these things could not be until the Lord Jesus had carried out the great work of the cross, taken His place at the right hand of God, and returned from heaven to establish His kingdom.

Before the blessing and prosperity promised can fill the earth, the evil must be dealt with, the sons of Belial, as thorns, must be thrust away. The Lord Jesus could not undertake this great work of judgment at His coming in grace, even as He said, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47); but He will deal with all the evil when He returns. Judgment is God's strange work, but it is necessary, for God will not allow evil men to continue for ever to fill the earth with corruption and violence: blessing and prosperity could not be maintained so long as evil men controlled the kingdoms of the world. The beast and the false prophet, and many other sons of Belial, will be thrust away by the Lord before He introduces the blessing of His kingdom. The hands of grace, held out to sinners when the Lord was here and during the many centuries since then cannot take hold of such men; they must be seized with an iron hand of government, and with the spear of divine judgment. To do this the Lord will provide Himself with a rod of iron and weapons of judgment, consigning the beast and the false prophet to the lake of fire immediately, for they shall be thrust there alive; their followers being slain with the sword to await in hell the judgment of the great white throne. Then shall follow the glorious reign of Christ with all its divine blessing and prosperity for men. Already we know the blessedness of the kingdom into which God has brought us, the kingdom of the Son of His love. The mighty men, of whom we have read, were with David in the days of his rejection; they passed through the sorrows and the conflicts with him, and are therefore privileged to be with him in his kingdom. The first of these mighty men was the Tachmonite, who was distinguished in an exploit of great power, for he fought against eight hundred, slain by him at one time. Does not this remind us of the words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy, "For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power . . ." (2 Timothy 1:7)? Paul, himself, was marked by the spirit of power in his many conflicts for the Gospel; see him before the great men of this world, before the High Priest, before Felix, Festus, King Agrippa, and then before Nero; strengthened by divine grace in his defence of the Gospel. He is marked by the same spirit when the truth is in jeopardy among the saints, refusing to yield to the false brethren; even withstanding Peter when he was blameworthy. We too can be marked by the spirit of power.

Eleazar the son of Dodo comes next. He was one of three mighty men who stood with David after the men of Israel were gone away. We are not told that they ran away, nor does it give the reason for their going; but these three men remained close to David in the face of overwhelming danger. We too are living in a day when many have gone away; some have been seduced by the world, some have wearied of the conflict, and some have just gone with the majority. How blessed if it can be said of us that we remained faithful to the Lord in the day of conflict and danger. But Eleazar was marked by endurance, for he smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, until his hand clave to the sword. Endurance is numbered among the features that marked Paul, recorded in 2 Timothy 3:10-11. It is not enough to enter into the conflict to which God has called us; we are to endure in it until the end, being strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might — and having done all to stand (Ephesians 6:10-19).

Shammah is commended for his courage; "he stood in the midst of the plot" when the people had fled before the Philistines. He was determined at whatever cost to secure the plot of lentils; he would not have the enemy take away the food of the people of God, and the Lord used him to deliver it out of the enemy's hand. We can look back to faithful and courageous men of God, true servants of the Lord, who stood against the enemy, and would not allow the enemy to rob the saints of the precious truth that God had given to His own. Do we value the truth that has been handed down to us? Are we prepared like Shammah, like Paul, and like servants of a past century, to stand for the maintenance of the truth in an evil day? Eleazar and Shammah may be the instruments used of God, but it is the Lord who works the great deliverance.

While David was in the cave of Adullam, hiding from Saul, the three chiefs mentioned in 2 Samuel 23:13-17 were evidently near enough to David to know the desires of his heart. His words, "Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" were not a commandment, but the expression of his heart's desire. Do we live near enough to the Lord to know the desires of His heart? Not only did these three chiefs know David's desire, but they were prepared at all costs to gratify his heart. What a rebuke and challenge to us this is! Sometimes we find saints of God saying, It does not say we are not to do this or that; they seek to gratify their natural desires under the plea that there is no divine prohibition to the thing they want. Ought we not to seek to carry out not only the commandments of the Lord, but also the desires of His heart? In John 14:15 we have the Lord's commandment, and love for Him seeks to obey them; indeed, John 14:21 shows that obedience to His commandments is the evidence of love; but love goes further in John 14:23, it seeks to carry out in obedience all His will, all His heart's longings. These three mighty men, in an act of great devotion put their lives in jeopardy to gratify the heart of David. You remember Epaphroditus; he jeopardized his life to bring to Paul from the saints at Philippi the things that would meet his needs. Are we prepared to lay down our lives for the brethren to show our devotion to Christ? We may not be asked to go so far as this, but we can give up some of our time or something of the things we possess to please the Lord Jesus.

After the first three, we have Abishai. He might have claimed a place of special distinction because of his natural relationships, for he was brother to Joab, the Captain of the host, and closely related to the king, but natural relationships do not secure for him, or for us, a place in the kingdom. Abishai secures his distinguished place because of his own prowess; although his great feat did not reach to the height of the Tachmonite's, he was nevertheless marked by the same spirit of power. We cannot attain to the fidelity and spiritual power that marked the Apostle Paul and other great servants of the Lord, but we can be marked by the same spirit in our own measure, by the same divine grace. (Another mighty exploit of Abishai's is found in 2 Samuel 21:16-17; he succored David when one of the giants sought to kill him, and he slew the giant).

Next comes Benaiah, son of a valiant man, and noted for his exploits. (Paul's natural line was noted for pure con-science, and Timothy's for faith — 2 Timothy 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:5). Among his many outstanding feats, three are selected for our instruction, and probably for their value typically. First, he slew two lion-like men of Moab. It was Moab that seduced the children of Israel into unholy alliances, which brought down upon them the chastening hand of God. At that time Phineas smote Zimri, a prince of the house of Simeon, and a woman belonging to a leading family in Midian; and for his deed, he received the commendation of Jehovah. Are we prepared to stand like Phineas and like Benaiah against all unholy alliances with the world?

Benaiah's smiting the lion in the pit surely speaks to us of one who has overcome the wicked one; that which John speaks of as characterizing the young men in the family of God (1 John 2:13-14). We have also beautiful pictures of Christ Himself in these incidents. A good many years ago, I remember a well-known brother saying, "You see Benaiah going down to where the lion was, even as the Lord Jesus went down in death to meet the power of the enemy. Who is going to be triumphant? Who is coming up out of the pit? Is it to be Benaiah or the lion? It was Benaiah! So it was with Christ: He arose triumphant from the grave, having annulled the power of the enemy." It was on a snowy day this happened; the circumstances of the conflict were all against Benaiah; yet he was victorious. When Adam fell, the circumstances of Eden were all advantageous; but when Christ met the foe, whether we think of the temptations or Gethsemane or the Cross, how very different were the circumstances to those of the first man when he fell before the enemy. The third exploit brought to our notice here is Benaiah's victory over the Egyptian. Do we not see the glory of the world, and its bondage for the people of God in Egypt? But we read of One Who said, "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). No doubt in John's gospel the Lord Jesus meets it in its religious leaders, but even Jerusalem, in rejecting Christ and His testimony bears the character of Sodom and Egypt (Revelation 11:8). The Egyptian is slain with his own spear, even as we read of the Lord's great triumph in Hebrews "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death" (Hebrews 2:14). If the Lord has overcome the world, He can enable us to overcome it also. Of this we have divine assurance in 1 John 5:4-5. With the eye resting on the Son of God we are assured of this victory. Paul shows us the way of victory over the world in the Epistle to the Galatians, in Galatians 2:20, and Galatians 6:14.

Finally we have the remaining heroes named, beginning with Asahel, and finishing with Uriah the Hittite; all men of renown, who had distinguished themselves in various ways in days of conflict. Asahel, we read elsewhere, was one who ran well, and Uriah refused the comforts of home while the servants of the king endured hardships. These have their own lessons for us as saints of God and servants of the Lord. In these last days when many are endeavouring to escape from the conflict the truth entails, we may have the privilege of standing loyal to Christ so as to be numbered among His mighty ones in His kingdom. We may be poor weak things in ourselves, but God has not given to us the spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of wise discretion. God calls upon us to be marked by the spirit evinced by such as the Tachmonite, Abishai and Benaiah; to be here waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ, seeking to be for His pleasure and for His glory, so as to have part with Him in the glory of His kingdom.

Wm. C. Reid.

Hold Fast the Truth. The great point, my brethren is to hold fast the truth. It is all well, and a desirable service of love, if a Christian can happily and with God-given wisdom meet the difficulties of others; but hold you the truth yourselves. Such is the power and simplicity of faith. Adversaries may no doubt try to embarrass you: if they will, let them do so. Do not be troubled if you cannot answer their questions and dispose of their cavils; you may regret it in charity for injured or misled souls. But after all, it is the positive truth of God which it is the all important business to hold, and this God has put in the heart of the simplest child who believes in Jesus.

W. Kelly.

S. Divine Fulness

Divine Fulness In Old Testament times there were partial revelations of God and of His mind and will. God made Himself known to Abram as the Almighty, and to Israel through Moses as Jehovah, the I AM, and God "at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Hebrews 1:1). The coming into the world of the Son of God made a full and perfect revelation of God, for the fulness of the Godhead was in Him here. The Son of God was present in Person, the Father, abiding in the Son, was here in testimony, and the Holy Spirit, abiding upon the Son, was here in power. This was something entirely new, for the Trinity had not been known before and the Father no man knew until made known by the Son (Matthew 11:27).

Fulness of Grace and Truth The opening verses of John's Gospel present Jesus as the eternal Word, One who existed in eternity as a distinct Person in the Godhead, and in whom all that God is in His nature and being is expressed. Creation's author, in whom life was inherent, had come into the world as light for every man, but He was not known by the world, and was not received by the people He had taken up and called His own. Yet there were those who received Him, who believed in His Name, and these were the children of God, born of Him, and with the coming of the Son they had the privilege of taking their place in God's family as His children, a privilege hitherto unknown even by the greatest of the saints of former days.

Christ's coming in flesh, the incarnation of the eternal Word, was the greatest and most wonderful event in the history of time. It was not the visit of a moment, but God's Son came to dwell among men so that men might know the God who had hitherto dwelt in the thick darkness. There could not but be the outshining of divine glory in such an event, but it was a glory hidden from the eyes of the men of this world. Only those whose eyes God had opened could behold the divine glory of the Son, so that John could write, "and we beheld His glory, the glory as of an only begotten with a Father." As one has said, the Godhead glory shone through the human veil, but only anointed eyes were capable of beholding it. This divine glory revealed the relationship of the Son as Man on earth with the Father in heaven.

Dwelling among men, the incarnate Word was "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), and as we trace the steps of Jesus through the pages of John's Gospel we learn something of the grace and truth subsisting in Him, and made known in His attitude towards men, and in His words and works. He was in His own Person "the truth," and the truth was made known in all His words and ways as a testimony for God. How very sad it was that the Lord had to say to the Jews who bitterly opposed Him, "And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not" (John 8:45).

If the refusal of the truth by the Jews exposed what they were, the reception of the truth revealed another company, of whom the Lord could say, "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:21). John and his fellow disciples were numbered among this company, and they discerned the grace and truth subsisting in their Master in all His ways. The Jews might reject the Son of God, but He continued with His mission, dispensing divine grace to men who were utterly unworthy of God's compassion and

goodness, made known in and through the Son of His bosom.

How rich were the benefits bestowed on those who received the Son of God and His testimony, for John wrote, "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16). The place given to the children of God in the Father's family, the living water of which the Lord spoke in John 4:1-54; John 7:1-53, the living bread come down from heaven, the eternal life manifested by the Son and appropriated by feeding on His death, the knowledge of the Father's Name and the place of relationship it involves, the peace and joy that we share with the Son, and the place that we have before the Father and in testimony for Him before the world, are all included in the "grace for grace" that we have received as having believed on the Son of God. There is also the grace of that which we are about to share in the day of the Son's glory, and with Him in the Father's house for eternity. The Fulness of the Godhead When the Son of the Father's love was here as Man, "in Him all the fulness (of the Godhead) was pleased to dwell," and this was in view of the reconciliation of all things to God (Colossians 1:19-20). God will yet have the whole universe in right relations with Him in spite of all that man is and all that Satan has done. Men refused the Son of God, and the world refused to be reconciled to God, although God in the perfection of goodness offered men the richest of blessing. The rejection of Jesus only proved that the world was incapable of receiving God's blessing, and it was therefore judged by God in the cross of Christ, and at the coming of the Lord it will be entirely set aside, the earth too being removed to make way for a new earth in the eternal state where God shall be all in all.

Already there are those who have been reconciled to God, those who have put their trust in God, and this has been secured for God "in the body of His (Christ's) flesh through death" (Colossians 1:22). Reconciliation for believers, who once were at enmity with God and at a distance from Him, means their presentation to God "holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight." This is our place in Christ before God and the Father now (Ephesians 1:4), and soon shall be our place with Christ at His coming. When the Lord Jesus comes in power and glory He will put down all opposition to God and reign in righteousness, reigning till He shall have put "all enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25). Having removed every opposing force and every enemy from the universe of God, death itself being destroyed, the Lord Jesus will hand back the kingdom to God. There will not be a sphere in the whole universe where there is opposition to God, and every sphere will be filled with Christ Himself, the Head over all, those who were in opposition being removed by the power of God in Christ.

What Christ came to accomplish with all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him will assuredly be accomplished, but this meant that He first must die, and make peace by the blood of His cross. In this great work of reconciliation the whole Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit have their part, and all the resources of the Godhead have been used to secure the great end that was in view. All the power of God, all the wisdom of God, and the wonders of the love, grace and mercy of God have been in evidence already for the reconciling of men. God's power has been used to quicken those who were dead, to raise Christ from the dead, and to defeat all the enemies, the principalities and powers who opposed the will of God. God's wisdom has been seen in the Person of the Son, and in the counsels that devised the plan to secure the blessing of men in reconciliation, and in bringing Christ to light as the Man of His counsels. In Colossians 2:9 we learn that "all the fulness of the Godhead" now dwells bodily in the Christ in the presence of God, and in His exalted place He is "the Head of all principality and power." The saints of God "are complete in

Him," not requiring anything outside of Christ, for they have everything in Him for their individual lives, and also for the assembly. Our eyes should ever be looking to Christ in heaven at all times for His interests here, for nothing that the world or any creature in the universe can give is able to help on the things of Christ. The Fulness of Christ

According to the purpose of God, Christ will fill the whole universe in the coming day, for in the mystery of God's will it has been declared that in the dispensation of the fulness of times all things will be headed up in Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10). To give effect to God's will, the Christ of God entered into death, but God raised Him from the dead, and gave Him the highest place in heaven. There, all things have been put under Christ's feet, and God has given Him to be the "Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:20-23).

While Christ's personal place as supreme in the coming day is brought out clearly in Scripture, there is also this that Christ will fill the universe with His fulness, His complement, the church that is united to Him as His body and His bride. Every thought of the Head will be expressed through the church in the day of Christ's universal Headship, even as the glory of Christ will be expressed in the church as His bride. There is already an expression of what Christ is in the church in its place of testimony, but there will be a full and perfect display of what Christ is in the day of His glory.

Having taken His place on high, Christ has given gifts to men, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come . . . unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ" (Ephesians 4:8-13). This ministry from Christ has continued until this day. We have the apostles and prophets in the writings of the New Testament, and there are still evangelists and pastors and teachers, even if they are not so named, the gifts readily being recognised. God desires His saints to be mature in the full knowledge of Himself, and it is for this the gifts are given. Every true gift from Christ can help towards this desired end, and such will minister to direct the saints to Christ. A "perfect man" is a saint of God of full grown stature, one who has matured through the knowledge of God, knowledge that comes through Christ, whether in relation to the revelation of the Father in Him in Manhood in this world, or in relation to Him as the Man of God's purpose at His right hand above. God also desires that the church should reach what He has destined it to be in His purpose, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all," and this means that the church should be now in testimony what it is to be in the day of display. We know that the church has failed grievously, but this in no wise sets aside the desired end, that the church should be fully matured now in its place of testimony. The Fulness of God

Many wonderful things are declared in Ephesians 3:1-21, where the truth of the mystery is unfolded, and where we read of God's all-varied wisdom being now displayed before the eyes of the intelligences of heaven in the church, and this according to "the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:9-11). The Apostle then prays for the saints that they might have Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith, that they might know something of the vast sphere of the riches of the Father's glory, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

Paul then adds, "that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." What a wonderful thing it is that saints of God in this world can be filled with His fulness, with the resources of the Godhead that dwell in the Son of God in heaven. If we are to be filled with the divine fulness then everything of

self, of the world, and of the earth must be removed from the vessel. Heart and mind are to be engaged with Christ and with all that is in Christ in the presence of God, and it is this that the prayer seeks for us. All that we are to be for God, and to do for Him, must come from the fulness of God that dwells in Christ. The more of this divine fulness that we possess, the more shall we be able to represent Christ in our place of testimony.

God is able to "do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think," and this because His own power worketh in us, the power manifested in raising Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-20), the power that quickened and raised us up to our place in Christ (Ephesians 2:1-6). Everything that God has purposed will be accomplished by His divine power, and when the present course of time is over this divine power will secure His "glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world with-out end." Now the fulness of God is available to enable us to be for God here; soon that divine fulness will be displayed in glory for all eternity.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Do We Value God's Inheritance?

Do We Value God's Inheritance?

There are few men who do not value an inheritance that has been given to them, or which belongs to them because of natural ties, yet there are saints of God who have little idea of what God has given to them as "heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ". If we have not some true conception of what God has given to us, it is little wonder that we do not value it. On the other hand, there are those who have heard of the wondrous inheritance that belongs to the saints of God, and because of occupation with the things of this world, and the things of the earth, have very little appreciation of what God, in His wondrous grace, has given to us in association with His own Son, and which is to be presently enjoyed.

God's Inheritance in His Saints The blessing of the Christian far exceeds anything the natural man can conceive, for God has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). In the riches of His grace God has taken away our sins, and in the glory of His grace He has brought us before Him as sons, sharing the place of His own Son in His favour and affections. God has brought us as sons into the secrets of His heart, telling us that in the coming, millennial day He will gather all things in the wide universe under the Headship of Christ, the Heir of all things.

Having been associated with His Son, we have in Him obtained an inheritance, sharing all with Him who is the centre of all blessing and the Head over all in the day of His glory. Even now God would have us in the enjoyment of the inheritance, giving us His Holy Spirit as the earnest of the inheritance (Ephesians 1:11-14). It is God's own universe, and Christ is the Heir, and with Him we are joint heirs, and God desires that we might even now apprehend something of "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18). Israel had an earthly inheritance, but God had something better in His counsels for those who would be associated with His Son, and in the wisdom of God this secret was kept in His own heart till Christ had come, died upon the cross and gone to heaven as the glorified Man. From heaven the divine secret has been disclosed that believers in Christ, from Jews and Gentiles, are "joint heirs" of God's wide inheritance, and "a joint body, and joint partakers of His promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings (Ephesians 3:6). **The Inheritance Reserved in Heaven**

If Paul looks at the inheritance in its widest aspect, as all that we shall share with Christ when He is Head over all things, Peter gives us another view, telling us that God has "begotten us again unto a lively hope . . . to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" (1 Peter 1:3-4). This hope is ours because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Christ died and rose again, entering heaven in triumph, and there He has secured for His own this blessed heavenly inheritance that He shares with His own.

Israel's inheritance was on earth, and though they lost it on account of their idolatry and rebellion, yet God in His goodness has reserved it for them under the new covenant. Our inheritance is not

on earth, but in heaven with Christ. The inheritance that God gave His earthly people was corruptible, and Israel corrupted it and defiled it with their wickedness and sins, but the new creation inheritance of heaven cannot be touched by the corrupting influences of this world or defiled by the tempter or evil of the flesh. All there is pure and holy, taking its character from God and from His Son. The Heritage of Faith and Truth The Holy Scriptures with all the precious, divine truth they contain have been given to us as an heritage from God, for in them we have made known the mind and will of God for His people, and also the wonderful revelation of Himself and all His thoughts that centre in His only begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul had his own part in making known to the saints the truth of God, that which is to be valued and held fast by those who love God. Having been appointed "a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the nations", Paul had his own special revelations from the Lord to communicate to the saints, not only in his oral ministry, but in inspired writings which have been left for us in the Holy Scriptures.

Timothy was exhorted by Paul, "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13). An outline of the ministry of Paul was to be held tenaciously by Timothy, for in it was the precious truth that God had vouchsafed to His dear servant. This outline could only be held fast as the eye rested, by faith, on Christ and as the truth was valued in the affections. This precious truth of God, which Timothy had received as a deposit from the Lord, was to be kept "by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" (2 Timothy 1:14), for the truth cannot be held by human means; it must be in evidence in ministry and practically by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. The things Timothy had heard of Paul were not private communications given in secret, but divine revelations made public in Paul's ministry, and these things were to be committed "to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). This blessed heritage of truth was to be passed on in a living ministry for the blessing of God's people. God's standard, by which everything taught has to be tested, is the holy word of God found in the Scriptures, but God has also a living ministry in the gifts given by the ascended Head of the church (Ephesians 4:11-13), men who bring the truth of God from His word to men. In 2 Timothy 3:1-17 we read of the last days, days in which we now live, for all the features mentioned in the opening verses of this chapter are to be seen in Christendom today. Our divine resource for these last days is found in the closing verses of this chapter, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them". Paul's doctrine is to be held fast as guidance for the individual life and for the assembly. Timothy was also to continue with the holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, and with "all Scripture", for it is divinely inspired, and profitable in every way, so that the man of God is "thoroughly furnished unto all good works". What a wonderful heritage we have in the Holy Scriptures for these last days. The Daughters of Zelophehad The land of Canaan was the inheritance that Jehovah gave to His people Israel, and the five daughters of Zelophehad greatly valued the inheritance that belonged to the house of their father, even although their father was dead and the inheritance not yet possessed. To show their concern they stood "before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Numbers 27:1-5) to make their case known. It was a matter that exercised Moses, who brought the case to the Lord Himself, who said, "The daughters of Zelophehad speak right thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto the" (Numbers 27:5-7). Not only did these five young women, who valued their inheritance, receive it at the mouth

of Jehovah, but they received something of far greater value, their names written in the Holy Scriptures. When the time came for the division of the inheritance, the daughters of Zelophehad again brought their matter before Eleazar, and before Joshua and the princes, so that it is recorded, "Therefore according to the commandment of the Lord he gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their father" (Joshua 17:3-4). Would to God the zeal of these sisters were imitated by the saints today who have been made heirs of a much better inheritance. How zealous we should be in seeking to learn of the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in His saints, of the inheritance in heaven and the wondrous heritage we have in the Scriptures and truth of God. It is also interesting to see that the sisters were to marry with the inheritance in view and not to marry those who had no real interest in it. The Two and a Half Tribes

God's purpose for Israel was to have His people surrounding Him in the land of promise, His tabernacle being in the midst of them with His glory in the holiest. The thought of the presence of God in the midst of His people was not uppermost in the minds of the tribe of Reuben and the children of Gad, for their minds were on the "very great multitude of cattle" that they possessed, and they desired to remain on the east side of the Jordan, separated from their brethren who had the God of Israel in their midst. Though angry with them, Moses allowed these two tribes, and the half tribe of Manasseh with them, to dwell on the wilderness side of Jordan, provided that the warriors among the two and a half tribes would, as they had proposed, go armed before the children of Israel until they had inherited their portion in the land (Numbers 32:1-32).

Like many Christians today, they were ready to fight the battles of the Lord, but they did not wish to dwell where the Name of the Lord was set. They were content to have their inheritance in a place that was suitable for their earthly possessions, but they came short of God's thoughts for the good of His people. They were doubtless good fighters, but their thoughts would be on their wives and children and their lands on the east of Jordan, and not on the blessedness of being where the Lord's Name was found. On returning to their possessions, the two and a half tribes built an altar by the Jordan, fearing lest in process of time they would be disowned as not belonging to God's people Israel. This fear was but one of the consequences of coming short of God's purpose. Another consequence was that they were the first to come under God's discipline when Israel turned away from Him, even as it is written, "In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel; from Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites" (2 Kings 10:32-33).

Naboth

Although not a great man in Israel, Naboth valued the inheritance that God had given to his fathers, and when the covetous eyes of Ahab would rob him of it, he showed how greatly he valued it in his words to the king, "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee" (1 Kings 21:1-3). Ahab's offer of "a better vineyard" or "the worth of it in money" did not tempt Naboth, for he prized what God had given to his fathers when God brought them out of Egypt into the promised land. Naboth's tenacity in clinging to his inheritance, in spite of the blandishments of the king, cost him his life at the hands of the wicked Jezebel who, acting in the name of the king, falsely charged him with blaspheming God and the king (1 Kings 21:8-14). The enemy of God's people would rob us of the portion God has given us if it were possible, but he cannot touch the inheritance we have "in Christ" and the inheritance laid up for us in heaven. How

often in the history of the church has the enemy sought to rob the saints of their heritage of the Holy Scriptures and the precious truth of God. Soon after the apostles had been called home to the Lord, the enemy succeeded in robbing the saints of the precious things Paul had committed to Timothy, and of much more of Scripture, yet God had His witnesses who, in their measure, were true to God, valuing the precious truth they had learned and standing faithful even unto death. Much of church history is a human record of the attempts of the enemy to rob the saints of their divine inheritance and to turn them from fidelity and what God has given them. In these last days the endeavour of the enemy is to take from us the truth that God has given in the Holy Scriptures. Leading men in Christendom deny the foundations of the faith and use even new translations of the Scriptures to further the ends of the enemy. What is called higher criticism, or modernism, is but an effort of the enemy to explain away the truth of God and take from the saints the portion that God has given to them to hold fast.

Hanameel and Jeremiah

Jeremiah was living in the last days of the kings of Judah. The ten tribes were already in captivity and Judah was about to share in this because of their idolatry and sins against Jehovah. At that time the Lord told Jeremiah that his uncle's son, Hanameel, would come to him and offer to him his inheritance, and, when he came, the prophet purchased from him his inheritance (Jeremiah 32:6-9). Having completed the documents of purchase, Jeremiah charged Baruch in the Name of the Lord to put the documents in an earthen vessel "that they may continue many days. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land" (Jeremiah 32:10-15).

Hanameel evidently thought it was better to dispose of his inheritance, and have money instead, seeing that captivity was near. It showed that he valued money rather than the inheritance that God had given him. Is there not a similar spirit abroad in the Christian profession today, when men are lovers of their own selves, lovers of money, and lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God? (2 Timothy 3:1-4). Moreover, the believer in the Lord Jesus is apt to be affected by the spirit that is in Christendom in these last days, when materialism plays so large a part in the affairs of men and in the professing church.

Jeremiah was of a different spirit, valuing the inheritance of God even in a time when it seemed as if all were to go into captivity and none would be left in possession of what God had given to their fathers. The prophet, by divine revelation, was able to look beyond the perilous times in which he lived, and to realise that even if Israel were in captivity, God would again bring them into the land He had given them, when that which had been lost through their rebellion against God would yet be possessed by His people in God's sovereign goodness on the ground of the new covenant, as foretold in the previous chapter (Jeremiah 31:31-34). May God, in His goodness, give us the spirit that was manifested in the daughters of Zelophehad, in Naboth and in Jeremiah, that enabled them to value God's inheritance and to show their concern for it.

Wm. C. Reid

S. Eternal Life.

Eternal Life. When God formed Adam from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, He set him up in all the delights of the earthly paradise, so that he might be happy in the circumstances provided for him in God's goodness, and be there with his God-given companion for the pleasure and glory of God. Alas! so very soon after, Adam and his wife forfeited fair Eden: and the tree of life was guarded by the Cherubim and the flaming sword, lest they should eat of it and live for ever in their sinful condition. That God had eternal life for man did not come out in relation to Adam innocent or fallen; indeed, it is expressly recorded that life, found in the tree of life, was forbidden to man in sin: nevertheless the tree of life surely indicates that God had in reserve a life upon which man had never fed, in which there was divine life and blessing for him. With the sentence of death upon him, Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years, but death at length claimed him; and although men in the successive generations lived to nearly a thousand years, every one of them, save Enoch, departed by way of death.

After cleansing the polluted earth, God called out Abraham, and gave him the promise of earthly blessing, blessing that would be complete in Christ's day, which Abraham was privileged by faith to see and rejoiced in it. From the seed of Abraham, the nation of Israel was separated from the nations, and put under the law, having the oracles of God and many advantages in the goodness of God. Man in Israel was under probation; he was being tested under the most favourable circumstances and had he kept the law he would have lived on earth in the blessings promised to those who kept the law; even as the Lord said to the young man, "This do and thou shalt live." Poor Israel failed miserably: but the gifts and calling of God are not subject to repentance: and on the ground of the promises made to Abraham, Israel will yet have blessing on the earth. This will not be on the ground of the covenant made at Sinai, but as founded on the New Covenant secured by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Looking forward to that day, David by the Spirit sees Israel in millennial blessing, where the dew of Hermon descends upon the mountains of Zion, and he says, "For there hath Jehovah commanded the blessing, life for evermore." What is denied to Adam in sin, is vouchsafed to Israel under God's grace, living for ever on the earth. No doubt, when the first earth passes, it will be to live on the new earth, in the conditions and circumstances prepared of God for men in the eternal scene. Daniel also foresaw many in Israel entering into this millennial blessing, awaking from their sleep among the nations to have eternal life, the life of earthly blessing promised to God's earthly people.

Speaking of Messiah, David said. "He asked life of thee thou gavest (it) Him, length of days for ever and ever." This is God's answer in resurrection to His dear Son. Who glorified Him on the earth. These are all the Old Testament Scriptures pertaining to eternal life, and it will be readily seen that there is no mention of its being communicated to any in those days there is no one who speaks of it as a present possession no one who sees anything other than continuance of life on earth.

Coming to the New Testament, the synoptic Gospels present eternal life in connection with the world to come yea it comes thus from the Lord's own lips. To the enquiry of the young man in Matthew 19:1-30, who asked "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life;" the Lord replies, "But if thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments." This of course would not take him beyond the Old Testament ground. It is evidently the same young man in Mark 10:1-52 and Luke 18:1-43. Arising out of this interview, the Lord speaks of life eternal in the coming age for those who, like Peter, had forsaken things here for Him and His testimony. In Matthew 26:1-75 it is again clearly in connection with the coming day that the sheep are given eternal life. Replying to the lawyer in Luke 10:1-42 the Lord tells him to keep the commandments, saying, "This do and thou shalt live." There is no thought in the synoptic Gospels of the revelation, present possession, or present enjoyment of a divinely communicated heavenly life; something entirely different from anything yet known upon the earth. With John the subject of eternal life is opened up in an entirely new way. In John 3:1-36 we find the necessity of the lifting up of the Son of Man that through faith in Him, the believer might have eternal life. God, in wonderful love, gives His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him might not perish, but have eternal life. Does not this scripture show that eternal life could not be given to men apart from the death of the Son of Man? Eternal life also brings to us the knowledge of the wonderful love of God. At the close of this chapter, the one who believes on the Son has life eternal; it is the present possession of the believer. So that eternal life is brought to us through Christ's death; it brings to us the knowledge of the love of God; and is possessed by those who believe in the Son. Another instructive point to be noted is that eternal life is heavenly; the truth of new birth and the kingdom, the Lord speaks of as earthly things. So that eternal life is a heavenly life, brought to us in the Son of God and made available to us through His death, in which we learn the love of God, and which is given to those who believe in the Son. The rivers of living water in John 7:1-53 expressly refer to the Spirit, about to be given as the power for testimony in the life of the believer; so that the fountain of living water in John 4:1-54 is evidently the indwelling Spirit, which in springing up into eternal life is the power for the enjoyment of the life given to those who believe in the Son. John 4:36 may refer to the coming day; in service for the Lord now the reaper receives wages, according to the estimation of the Lord of the service rendered; and the fruit is being gathered in view of the coming day when the sower and the reaper shall rejoice together. The gathering unto life eternal may look at the display of the fruits in the coming glory; it may also be that in the results of the service of Christ the servant is brought into the blessedness of the life enjoyed in the power of the in-dwelling Spirit.

Eternal life in John 5:1-47 belongs to him who hears the word of God's Son, and who believes Him Who sent Him. So that this life consists in hearing the word of the Son, and in having the faith of the Father Who sent the Son. How blessed it is to be listening to the word of Him Who came forth from the Father, for that word brings to us all the thoughts of the Father's heart, all the things belonging to the Son, all the wealth of grace introduced in the ministry of Him Who knows all the secrets of the Father's will and counsels. This was not found in the Old Testament Scriptures. The Jews searched these Scriptures: and had they understood them they would have learned of Him Who alone could give them life eternal; but they would not come to Him that they might have life.

There is food which abides to life eternal, food which can nourish and satisfy the heart; the bread of God. Feeding upon Christ brings this blessed life to the soul in its practical realisation in communion with God. How necessary then to feed on Christ if we would truly know what eternal

life is; delighting in Him, meditating upon Him, appropriating Him: and all this as we are communing with Him. It is not that we willed to have this life: we have it on account of the Father's will. Not only are we to be raised up in the last day in glory with Christ, but even here we are brought into this wonderful portion, partaking of the heavenly life which is found in the Son; and entering into it as believing in Him. Surely this means that as we are truly occupied with Him, the eye in faith resting on Him, we have the life which lies outside of things here. It is true that this life belongs to every one who has believed in Him; but faith is a present living thing, which engages the heart with the object upon which it rests; and it is being thus engaged with the Son of God that eternal life is ours in its reality. But if it is as feeding upon the Son and as believing in Him, it is as eating His flesh and drinking His blood that we have eternal life. Eternal life is truly known in feeding upon the death of Christ, in thus appropriating the love of the Father and the Son made known in Christ's death.

Well did Peter say "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Eternal life has come in the Person, and in the testimony of God's own Son; and although it was but in a feeble way the disciples of Jesus could then know eternal life, not yet having the indwelling Spirit, they knew that in the Son of God, present among them, there were the precious words which gave them some knowledge of it. That blessed heavenly life was theirs, the gift of God to them, received by believing in the Son of God, yet the full joy and blessedness of it could not be theirs until the Lord Jesus died, and until they ate His flesh and drank His blood. There could not be the full knowledge of God's love until His Son died; nor could there be the true knowledge of the Father and the Son until the Holy Spirit came to indwell the believer. Still, it is good to know that while awaiting the full knowledge of the eternal life, the disciples knew that the Lord Jesus had for them the words of eternal life, which held them in deep attachment to Him, so that Peter could say "Lord to Whom shall we go?" They seemed to realise that eternal life was the substance of the Lord's ministry for them: a blessing of surpassing value, so valuable that they would remain with Jesus, even if all others left Him. In John 10:1-42 the Good Shepherd leads His sheep from the Jewish fold, saying "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." The disciples recognised and followed the Shepherd, they knew His voice; they not only knew He had the words of eternal life, but the voice drew them to His Person, the giver of eternal life. He was not simply giving the words of eternal life, or the promise of eternal life, but He was giving the life itself. It was a life altogether different from the life they had in the Jewish fold: in it they could go in and out and find pasture; they had divine liberty and heavenly food. Nor was it a life that death had claim to, for they would never perish; it was truly eternal life as to its duration, even if it was eternal as belonging to a scene where time was not. Moreover if there was no cessation of this life, and death could never rob them of it, none could ever take them from the hand of the Son or the hand of the Father, so that there never could be any possibility of the sheep losing the eternal life. They might lose the enjoyment of it, or never have a very deep sense of its reality in their souls nevertheless, if they were Christ's sheep, this eternal life was theirs as the gift of the Good Shepherd, the Son of God. But observe it is after the sheep follow the Shepherd out of the Jewish fold that He speaks of giving them eternal life. They could not have eternal life there, for it was not connected with the legal system, but with the heavenly order of things into which the Son was leading them. The first reference to eternal life in John 12:1-50 shows that it is a life in contrast to the life we live in our present circumstances "He that loves his life shall lose it and he that hates

his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal." Do we really value life in this world or are we seeking our life in another world? The life lived down here in the enjoyment of the things of nature and of the things of the world will come to a close, it will be lost; only what has been sought of Christ will abide, being kept to life eternal. No doubt the future is in view, for eternal life is not only a present possession, it is ours after we leave this world behind. Hating the life in present things we shall indeed seek the life that is to be ours in the coming day, but that is the eternal life even now ours in association with the Son of God on the other side of death. Hence the life we keep to eternal life is what we have lived and enjoyed in communion with Christ, yea with the Father and the Son, in those things made known by the Son in His testimony here, and made available for us by His death upon the cross. So that eternal life is not connected with our life in this world; it is not the life touched in natural things; it lies in things outside of this world altogether.

John 6:1-71 told us that it was the Father's will to give the believer eternal life; now the Lord tells us that all He spoke was from the Father, it was His commandment, containing life eternal. And this is what the Jews were rejecting in refusing the Son of God; they were turning from the divine blessing of eternal life offered to them in the Father's grace. If this brings before us the utter folly of Israel, it also manifests the wondrous grace of the Father and the Son. What can we say to this, that the Father had sent forth His well-beloved Son into the world with this great message of life eternal, giving Him the very words to speak, so that we might know perfectly the grace of His heart? And to think that the Son, so great and so glorious, should undertake to proclaim the message of the Father; giving out exactly the thoughts and the very words committed to Him by the Father. Surely these things should bring us down in worship before the Father and the Son. But the Son is no longer here, He has been glorified by the Father, and this in response to the expressed desire of His heart, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee" (John 17:1). Then we see how the Father's glory is to be secured, "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." Had He not glorified the Father in faithfully proclaiming the words of eternal life according to the Father's commandment? Now He would still glorify the Father in giving eternal life to those the Father had given to Him in the counsels of His grace. As the Good Shepherd He had spoken of giving life eternal to the sheep; this was the grace of the incarnate Son; now in that same grace, the glorified Son would communicate the eternal life for the Father's glory, for it was the Father's will to give the believer life eternal. Here we see how the life is connected with the counsels of the Father, not as elsewhere with our believing, but as imparted to those given to the Son in the Father's counsels of love. The Son in communicating the eternal life to His loved ones is glorifying the Father in accomplishing His will and counsels.

Then the Son, in speaking to the Father, lets us into the true secret of eternal life, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." It is a life that consists in the knowledge of the Father, revealed in the Son, and in the knowledge of Him in Whom God is revealed. This is a knowledge that lies entirely outside of man's world; it has come down here in Jesus, but it shall be ours in Him for all eternity. How blessed for the believer to retire in spirit into the Father's presence, to be engaged there with Him-self and with His well-beloved Son; to be in the consciousness of the deep love made known in Jesus, and to enjoy it in the wonderful place of nearness and relationship into which God's grace and Christ's work have brought us. Here is an entirely new world for us to live in, with new pleasures, new joys, new

relationships, new affections, new objects; yea where all things are new. But while they are new to us, they are the things that have ever existed, belonging to a world outside of time and the senses of men, for it is the eternal life that was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. In the holy atmosphere of divine and heavenly relationships and affections the spirit can rest in all that the Father is, and the divine nature within us can delight in Jesus Christ, sent of the Father to bring us into this eternal life.

Paul and Barnabas told the Jews that they had judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, so they turned to the Gentiles; then Luke records that as many as were ordained to eternal life believed (Acts 13:46; Acts 13:48), indicating as John does that the subject is connected with God's sovereignty and the exercise of faith. In the epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul shows that eternal life is entered into at the close of the life of those who seek for glory, honour, and incorruptibility, that is the life of the saint of God. Again in Romans 5:21 we are taught that grace reigns through righteousness until eternal life is reached in the world to come. Then at the close of Romans 6:1-23 as servants of God we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end for us is eternal life; but this eternal life is the gift of God to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. These passages in Romans plainly teach that eternal life belongs to the end of the life of responsibility; it is not at all connected with our path of service to God down here. But while this is so, Galatians teaches that "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Life eternal will be reaped at the end, although there is also a sense in which we may enter into it now, as John teaches, and as Paul exhorts Timothy, "Lay hold on eternal life." In Timothy's first epistle, 1 Timothy 1:16, eternal life is the end reached by faith; and in 1 Timothy 1:6 as we have seen Timothy is exhorted to lay hold of eternal life now, the life to which God has called us. Paul, introducing the second epistle to Timothy, speaks of himself as apostle, "according to the promise of life, the (life) which is in Christ Jesus;" and in the introduction to Titus, Paul is bondman and apostle "in (the) hope of eternal life, which God, Who cannot lie, promised before the ages of time." Eternal life is the "blessed hope" of Titus 2:13, and for the third time in this short epistle it is referred to as a hope in Titus 3:7.

Jude also gives the future aspect of eternal life. Here in a world, fast ripening for divine judgment, the Christian is to keep himself in the love of God, and the bright prospect before him is eternal life, into which the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ shall bring us. Life in its divine fulness and joys shall be ours when the Lord Jesus takes us to heaven, and when, with glorified bodies like His own body of glory, we shall enter into without hindrance all that has been brought to us here by the Holy Spirit, and those things which could not be tittered to men in flesh and blood down here.

John, in his First Epistle has much to say of eternal life: it was something entirely new for men; first manifested by the Son of God incarnate, the Word of Life: the True God and Eternal Life; manifested in view of its communication to us, that we might possess it in Him, and find our deepest joys in its realisation in communion with the Father and the Son.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Faith and Confidence of the Godly

Faith and Confidence of the Godly

Psalms 17:15. The seventeenth Psalm is entitled "A Prayer of David," and in it we have the exercises of the godly man in the midst of the wicked. David speaks to Jehovah of his own integrity, and desires to be kept by Him, as the apple of His eye, from the wicked who compass him about. The oppressors of the godly are "the men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly Thou fillest with Thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes" (Psalms 17:14). Such is man without God. He thinks only of present things, living in that which is to pass away, without a thought of God and of eternity beyond the grave.

"as for me" In contrast with the men of the world, the Psalmist tells God of His convictions. He is affected in this life with what is to be his portion in the life to come. This is an altogether personal matter. He cannot speak for others here; it is what affects his own soul before God, but he would have others understand his exercises before Jehovah. There were not the crystal clear revelations of Christianity upon which to rest his soul, but there was evidently light from God to David as to the future, and his faith laid hold upon that which God had revealed, and the Spirit of God through David, in this portion, seems to have given light beyond his dispensation.

"I will behold Thy face"

God had appeared to the Patriarchs, to Moses and to others, and had said to Moses, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," and the commentary of the Lord on this is, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living

(Exodus 3:6; Matthew 22:29-32). This Scripture makes known that the saints of God would rise from the dead, and also that they live before the face of God in heaven. Indeed, in Luke's Gospel, the Lord shows us that Abraham is alive there (Luke 16:22-31); and also that Moses is alive, for he appeared with Elias on the glory mount in the company of Jesus.

If David apprehended the force of God's communication to Moses in Exodus 3:6, we can understand how his soul laid hold by faith on the prospect of seeing Jehovah's face. Whether this was so, or not, the Spirit of God gave him this deep conviction, which enabled him to say with such certainty, "As for me, I will behold Thy face." Nor can we doubt for a moment that David was thinking of what lay beyond death, for he had just been speaking of the men of this world, who had their portion "in this life." He was clearly thinking of the life to come. With the Christian, there is not only the dim light of the Old Testament on this matter, but the crystal clear light of the New Testament, in both the words of the Lord Jesus Himself, and in the words of the Holy Spirit come down from heaven. Having this light, the Christian can speak with the same conviction as David, and as having faith and hope in the word and promises of God. The Christian knows what it is to be brought before the face of God, accepted in Christ, and he can say with the writer to the Epistle to the Hebrews, "We see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour"; and can also say, "We all,

looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face" (2 Corinthians 3:18); and it is our present privilege to possess the "knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). By faith, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, it is the Christian's privilege to say with the Psalmist that we behold His face.

We can also say with the Psalmist, "I will behold Thy face," if it is the Lord's will to take us to Himself before He comes for His church. To the dying thief, who said, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," He replied, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42-43). It is no longer to Abraham's bosom that the saints of God go when released from the earthen vessel, but to the Lord Himself in the heavenly paradise.

Through the Apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit confirms to us the words of the Lord. Paul had been caught up into paradise, and had learned the unspeakable bliss of the Lord's presence there, and could therefore say, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Php 1:23). Had he only thought of himself there would have been no strait, he would only have desired the far better portion, but when he thought of those who were leaning on him, and requiring his tender care, he was willing to continue in his path of trial and suffering for their sake. The Spirit of God also tells us through Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:8, "We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

Blessed as it is to behold the face of the Lord in the unclothed state referred to in 2 Corinthians 5:1-21, it will be yet more blessed to see the face of Jesus when all the saints are gathered home, even as we read in Revelation 22:3-4, "And His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His Name shall be in their foreheads." So that the saints of the present dispensation know what it is to see the unveiled face of Jesus now; they have the prospect of seeing Him and being with Him if called to pass through death, and will also see His face in the day of coming glory. The writer of Psalms 49:1-20 contemplated the end of the men of this world who trusted in their riches, saying, "Like sheep they are laid in the grave . . . and their beauty shall consume in the grave" (Psalms 49:14). With the godly there was hope, even as the Psalmist writes, "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for He shall receive me." How very blessed was this confidence that looked beyond the grave to be received by God into His presence.

"in righteousness"

If David was to behold Jehovah's face, he realised it would be in righteousness, for God must ever act in consistency with His holy nature, with the claims of His throne regarding sin perfectly met. Since Christ has died, and in His death meeting every claim of the divine throne in relation to our guilt, we can clearly see how we can behold His face in righteousness. Abraham was accounted righteous by God through faith in Him, and we too have righteousness imputed to us "if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:22-25).

Besides, as being in Christ, and having the life of the One in whom we have been justified, God says we are "constituted righteous" (Romans 5:19); and this is the portion of all who truly come under the headship of Christ, the last Adam. Like the prodigal in the best robe, we even now are graced in Christ before God, even as it is written, "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). We

are God's righteousness in Christ now, and shall be displayed as God's righteousness in Christ in the day of His glory.

"I shall be satisfied"

Even now, as having drunk the "living water" (John 4:14), the Christian knows what it is to be satisfied with Christ. Christ is enough to satisfy every desire of the heart that grace has produced in us. And if the believer is called to pass through the article of death, and has the "far better" part with Christ in the heavenly paradise, the spirit will find satisfaction in Christ in that blessed place. But here the Psalmist is looking further ahead, as the Christian also does, to the time when every longing will be fully satisfied, and that for all eternity.

"when I awake" When on earth, the Lord Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (John 11:11). When death comes to the Christian it is but sleep, sleep for the body till awakened by the Lord at His coming. Therefore it is written of Stephen, "And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:60). Paul, by the Holy Spirit, speaks of the saints who die as in sleep (1 Thessalonians 4:13-15; 1 Thessalonians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 15:20; 1 Corinthians 15:51), and it is also written of David in Acts 13:36. The mother who puts her babe to sleep does so in view of its awakening. So with the believer, whether of the Old Testament days or of the days since: those put to sleep by Jesus will be awakened by Jesus. It was David's confidence and hope; it is ours also. Resurrection was the hope of the saints of old, as seen in the words of David, and of Job (Job 19:26-27). The New Testament abounds with this precious truth. The Lord speaks of "the resurrection of life; and . . . the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:29); and Paul before Felix spoke of "a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15); and other Scriptures show that there are two distinct resurrections, with a thousand years between.

"with thy likeness"

Man was made in the likeness of God, but alas, he soon lost this: but it is the privilege of the Christian to come out in the moral likeness of Jesus here (2 Corinthians 3:18). David, by the Holy Spirit is confident he will rise from the dead with the likeness of Jehovah; but the New Testament sheds abundant light on this blessed subject for the Christian.

We shall indeed be like Jesus, whether it be coming out of death, or having our mortal bodies changed, if alive at the coming of the Lord, for, says the Apostle John, "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Paul joins with John in this glad theme, writing, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Php 3:21).

Well might the Psalmist speak of being satisfied when he awakes "with Thy likeness." He could not then understand this precious truth as we do now, but faith laid hold of it, even if only known in a dim way. David will indeed be like Jesus; with us, he will have a body of glory, like the body of Jesus, a body suited to the heavenly place where the heavenly saints, in their different families, shall dwell before the face of the Lord, in the Father's house for the ages of ages. Our every desire will then be satisfied to the full, for all that God has promised us will then be possessed when we are with Jesus and like Him, sharing His place before the Father's face, knowing the Father's love resting on us as it rests on Him, being in the same relationship with the Father, where He is the

Firstborn among many brethren; and the church forming the body and bride of Christ, to have His love lavished on her, and being the vessel for the eternal display of the glory of God.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Features of David

Features of David

Many of the outstanding characters of the Old Testament foreshadow in different ways the Lord Jesus. Adam, it is written in Romans 5:14, "is the figure of Him that was to come"; being the head of a race, which partook of the results of his fall; even as Christ is the head of a race that partakes in all the blessings that have been procured by His death. Such as Noah, Isaac, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, David and Solomon, present some of the distinctions that belong in their perfection to Christ. The moral features of Joseph, as also his exalted place in Egypt, with a remarkable number of other details in his interesting course, speak forcibly of the Lord Jesus. In Noah we learn of the government entrusted to Christ; in Isaac of the beloved of the Father, who receives his bride after passing through death; in Moses of the prophet whom God would raise up for the deliverance of His people; in Aaron of the priesthood that Christ would exercise; in Joshua of the leader who would fight the battles of Jehovah; and in Solomon of the king who would reign in righteousness and glory.

David is not only a type of the Lord Jesus as the warrior king, but as the man after God's own heart. In the life of David there were many imperfections, and one very dark blot that cast its shadow upon the remainder of his life; but there were features that indicate to us the perfections of Jesus, and on these the heart delights to dwell, even if it is necessary for us to consider the failures so that we might learn that there was only One in whom there was no failure; only One who could say, "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). But there were features in Christ, prophetically recorded, that were His alone. An example of this is found in Psalms 45:1-17, "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever." David may have been the fairest of his generation, but Jesus was fairer than all the children of men; all His inward springs poured grace into His lips, expressing what He was; and He is the One who is blessed for ever because of what He is and was down here. The Anointing of David When God had rejected Saul because of his disobedience to His commandment, He sent Samuel to the house of Jesse the Bethlehemite saying, "I have provided me a king among his sons." God did not indicate which of Jesse's sons was to be anointed, and when Eliab, the eldest of Jesse's sons came before Samuel, he said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him." But the divine answer was most instructive, not only for Samuel and all present that day, but for us also; "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the out-ward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). Whatever the notable features of the first seven sons of Jesse, none of them had been chosen of God to rule over His people; but David, the youngest, who had not even been called, had to be sent for, for he was the one to be anointed.

Although God had said to Samuel concerning Eliab, "Look not on his countenance," yet, when David, the chosen of God, is described, his countenance is specially mentioned. It would seem that the Spirit of God in noting the appearance of David is not simply concerned with features

naturally attractive, but rather with the moral traits indicated by them. The outward beauty in the case of David reflected the hidden beauty that delighted the heart of God, a beauty that pointed to the deep perfections of Christ. How different it was with Absalom! His outward beauty was deceptive; beneath the fair exterior were features that were despicable, arrogance, treachery and murder.

He was ruddy. The natural freshness and vigour of youth and early manhood were evident in the colour of David; but what is commended by the Spirit of God in him was offensive to Goliath and despised by him, for we read in 1 Samuel 17:42 of the next chapter, "And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance." The giant was unable to discern the lovely traits of moral worth that God took pleasure in, and that were reflected in his appearance. When the bride in the Canticles speaks of the perfections of her

Beloved, she says, "My Beloved is white and ruddy" (Song of Solomon 5:10). She delights in the precious features that the Spirit of God discerned in David.

Withal of a beautiful countenance. The beautiful features of the Lord Jesus could not be seen by the leaders of Israel; their eyes had not been opened to see beauty that was the delight of His God and Father. Of this Isaiah had foretold when he wrote, "There is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isaiah 53:2). But there were those who were attracted by His beauty. The poor sinner of Luke 7:1-50, who washed His feet with tears in Simon's house had discernment far beyond anything known by Simon. Wherever we see the Son of God, whether surrounded by publicans and sinners, or His face shining as the sun on the glory mount, or on the cross with "His visage . . . marred more than any man," it is to behold the moral beauty that can only be seen by those in whose hearts God has wrought by His Spirit.

Goodly to look to. How goodly to look to was Jesus! Of John the Baptist it is recorded, "And looking at Jesus as He walked, he says, Behold the Lamb of God." John's heart was enraptured with the beauty that he beheld in Jesus, and it was this that brought from his lips the expression that evidently caused his two disciples to leave him and follow Jesus. Stephen teaches us that Jesus is goodly to look to where He is in heaven, for gazing upon Him there he was changed into the same image, reflecting His features as he died in testimony for Him; and we too are privileged to behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, and to "see Jesus" crowned with glory and honour.

Called to Serve Saul (1 Samuel 11:18) When the Lord departed from Saul, and sent him an evil spirit, on the advice of his servants he sought a cunning player on the harp to charm away the evil spirit. One of Saul's young men knew of the very man who would answer to the requirements, and he gives a very remarkable testimony to David, indicating that he had watched David closely, and was intimately acquainted with his outstanding features. It was evident from his accurate description of David that the future king of Israel had early manifested the traits becoming to the high office for which God was preparing him. A son of Jesse the Bethlehemite. There was nothing outstanding, so far as man could see, about his birth; but when we trace his genealogy, as given in Matthew's Gospel, how much there is to learn of God's ways in preparing His King, whether it be King David, or David's greater son, the Son of God. Although Jacob, when dying, had indicated that Judah was the royal tribe, it was not until David was anointed that the royal family came into

evidence. None could have foreseen that David, the youngest in a family of eight sons, and that a family comparatively obscure, would be the one to sit upon Jehovah's throne. And who would have thought that the lowly Babe, born in Bethlehem's stable, was God's King; and that the little hand that appeared so weak would wield the sceptre of the universe, as it had formed the wide creation? Who is skilled in playing. The skill that had been acquired in the obscurity of Bethlehem was now to be displayed in the presence of the king; and later, when David came to the throne, and instituted the service of song in the house of Jehovah, "the sons of Asaph under the direction of Asaph . . . prophesied at the direction of the king" (1 Chronicles 25:2; 1 Chronicles 25:6). All was under the chief musicians, but they were controlled by the king, "the sweet Psalmist of Israel." The service of praise to God today is not with instruments of music as in David's day; but there is the praise in which God delights, and the One who leads the praise is Him who says, "In the midst of the assembly will I sing praise unto Thee" (Hebrews 2:12). And he is a valiant man. When David proposed to fight Goliath, he had to persuade Saul that he was able for the task, and he cited his battles with the lion and the bear. Saul was evidently unaware of David's prowess, even though he had been told before that he was "a valiant man." Indeed, after David had slain the giant, he was enquiring as to who he was, having evidently forgotten all about his service with the harp, and as his armour-bearer. But others knew that David was brave and fearless, and could bear witness before Saul as to him. And what shall we say about the Son of God? How valiant was He! Coming into a world of sin to meet all the deadly opposition of Satan and of his instruments, He met all, not in the spirit that men call brave but, with the meek and quiet confidence of dependence upon God for every phase and detail of His conflicts. And a man of war. So far as we know, David had never been called upon to show himself a man of war; and even when the three eldest sons of Jesse followed Saul to battle, David returned from Saul to keep the sheep. But the young man who spoke of David to Saul had evidently discernment and judgment in so describing David. His overthrow of Goliath, and his history, prove how right the young man's judgment was. When Moses and the children of Israel celebrated the defeat of Pharaoh, they sang, "The Lord is a man of war"; and this they had seen. Our Lord Jesus met and defeated Satan and all his hosts; and the day is swiftly approaching when He shall come out of heaven upon a white horse, "and in righteousness He doth judge and make war" (Revelation 19:11). Before He introduces the blessings of His kingdom, it is necessary that the true David, the warrior King, should remove every opposing force, so that no evil will be able to raise its head during His reign in righteousness. And skilled in speech. The Psalms of David attest to the excellence of his words, and his ability to speak what was pleasing to God. His "last words" reveal that the secret of his skill in speech was "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2). David's words were inspired of God, and he could also say, "The Rock of Israel spoke to me," for he also received communications from God. But when we listen to Jesus, how surpassing wonderful are His words. At Nazareth they wondered at the words of grace that proceeded out of His mouth. The men sent to take Him are compelled to return without Him, saying, "Never man spake like this man." Yet all His words were the words of the Father: He never claimed to be the source of His communications; as sent by the Father, He attributed both His words and His works to the Father. And of good presence. There was a charm about David that had caused this young man to speak of him in this way: and later, Jonathan, the son of Saul came under David's charm, even facing his father's anger to speak well of David. What was true of David naturally was true of Jesus spiritually: there was a charm about Him personally, and about His words, that drew others

to Him. When some left Him, and He challenged the disciples with the words, "Will ye also go away?" Simon Peter answered, "Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Even in His death, Mary of Magdala refused to leave Him; and Saul of Tarsus, after years of devoted service to Him, desired that he might "know Him." Christ held his heart, so that he could say that he desired that Christ might be magnified, whether in his life or in his death. And Jehovah is with him. This was David's greatest asset. All his natural ability and charm would have availed him little without the presence of Jehovah. We see this in Saul, who had so much that was naturally attractive, but when he lost the Spirit of the Lord, all his personal greatness was without avail. Of the blessed Lord Jesus we read in Acts 10:1-48 that He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil "because God was with Him"; and when the hour drew near for Him to go to the cross, He said to His disciples, "Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me" (John 16:32).

It is impossible to overestimate the value of considering the features of Christ as they are brought before us by the Spirit of God in the saints of Old Testament times. Sometimes it may be in the position or relationships in which the type is found that Christ is seen, as in Adam, who was the figure of Him to come; or as in Aaron, who prefigured Christ as God's High Priest. Often, the lovely moral traits that were found in their perfection in Christ are seen in some dim or feeble light in the saints of old, as in a Joseph, a Moses or a Daniel; but every ray of moral beauty, no matter how dim its shining, is delightful to contemplate if it brings Christ before us; for every feature of Christ in the saints brings pleasure to God. Every feature of grace and beauty that we can trace leads our hearts to Him in whom all were seen in their fulness and perfection, God's well-beloved Son in whom was found all His delight. In spite of all the imperfections and failures that are to be found in the life of David, there were many lovely traits in him that bring Christ before us, traits that caused God to say, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will" (Acts 13:22). From the very first mention of David there was that which the Spirit of God viewed with pleasure, and at the close of his life his last words are pregnant with meaning as they point to Christ. Although his house did not answer to what God required of His king, yet his confidence was in the word of God, and his soul rested in the "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," that He had made with him; a covenant that did not depend on David's faithfulness, but on God's and that would be made sure in Christ risen from among the dead.

David as the Sent One of His Father

Although David had been made Saul's armour-bearer, his services were evidently not valued or required by Saul when the Philistines gathered together their armies to fight against Israel. Saul had evidently forgotten that one of his young men had described David to him as "a mighty valiant man, and a man of war" (1 Samuel 16:18). Yet David is content with his lot, whether it be in the service of the king, or looking after his father's interests, for we read, "But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem."

David's obedience to his father. There is no indication of David fretting among the sheepfolds, or resenting being absent from the armies of Israel; and at the bidding of his father he is content to be his messenger to take food to his brethren and a present to their captain, and to bring back tidings of the welfare of his brethren. The simplicity of David's obedience is very beautiful: his own will is

entirely lost sight of, and his father's will is the only reason for his mission. Having received his father's commandment, he makes haste to carry it out, for "David rose up early in the morning . . . and went, as Jesse had commanded him" (1 Samuel 17:15-20). Do we not see in this something of the obedience that marked the Son of God when here on earth? Although so great and glorious, He is content to be the Good Shepherd, and to say, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:20). How often we read of the Son seeking the Father's will, as in John 4:34, where He said to His disciples, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." The obedience of the Son was perfect in every moment of His life, and "being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Php 2:8). In his obedience, David is careful to look after every interest of his father's, for, on leaving the sheepfold "he left the sheep with a keeper," and when he ran into the army to salute his brethren, "David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper." Diligence and eagerness marked him in carrying out his father's will, and also faithfulness regarding all that had been put into his hands, whether the sheep or his father's substance. Does not this remind us of Him who said, "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39)?

Opposition to David. While carrying out his father's commandment, and speaking to his brethren, Goliath, the champion of the Philistines came forth and issued his challenge to Saul and his armies, a challenge that dismayed Saul and all Israel. But David was not dismayed, for he viewed the challenge of the giant, not to Saul and his armies but to the armies of the living God. Bringing God in between the enemy and His people made all the difference; for it is not now seen as a challenge to the weakness of Saul and his men, but a challenge to God and His power. David viewed this situation as the Lord Jesus viewed every situation in relation to God.

Bringing God in made David bold, but it made Eliab angry. Eliab, like Saul and all Israel, was afraid of Goliath, and David's confidence in God exposed the lack of confidence in God in all who feared the giant; and this was the real cause of Eliab's opposition. Nature's strength had been exposed in its weakness, not only by the challenge of Goliath, but by the confidence that David had in God. The unrighteous anger that burst out in false accusations was quietly met by the simple answer, "Is there not a cause?"

David could have answered the first question, "Why camest thou down hither?" with the words, "To do my father's will." As regards the sheep, they were well cared for by the keeper. The pride was not in David's heart, but in Eliab's, and it had been wounded by the manifestation of his weakness, and his envy of his brother's confidence in God was responsible for the explosion of his anger. There was no naughtiness in David's heart; the evil was in Eliab's and was exposed in his false accusations. Nor was there a battle for David to witness: only the cowardly shrinking of the men of Israel from one who defied the armies of the living God.

While on earth, the Lord Jesus had to meet the same spirit of opposition, but when He was reviled, he reviled not again. How often was he misjudged and falsely accused! The very nation that he had come to save "received Him not," but His confidence in His God and Father was unshaken in the midst of all the evil. At the close of His life the deadly opposition of the leaders of Israel reached its height, and when they falsely accused Him before Pilate, even the Gentile Governor could discern that it was "for envy they had delivered Him" up to be condemned (Matthew 27:18).

David's confidence in God. The first words of David to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him" expressed his simple, yet profound, confidence in God. Israel's God would not only meet the challenge of the enemy, but would give him the strength to fight with him. Saul, viewing the whole matter from a natural point of view says to David, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." David's answer showed where his confidence lay, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." Is there not in David's attitude the reflection of that of the Lord Jesus as He approached the hour when He would meet the "strong man," in mortal combat? Already He had met the foe in the wilderness, and triumphed through the word of God, in simple obedience to it; when He approached the hour of the cross, it is written, "And being in conflict, He prayed more intently. And His sweat became as great drops of blood, falling down upon the earth" (Luke 22:44). But His confidence is in God His Father, and coming forth from the Garden He said, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). He could speak to His disciples of what lay before Him, telling them of the death He would die, but assuring them of His triumph in resurrection.

David the Overcomer

David went forth to the conflict assured that "This uncircumcised Philistine" would meet the same end as the lion and the bear, because he had "defied the armies of the living God." He does not speak of Goliath as a giant, but as an "uncircumcised Philistine," one who had no link with God, but on the contrary was an enemy of God and His people. Moreover he views Israel in their true dignity as "the armies of the living God," whom God had set apart to act for Him with divinely given power.

Every moment in His sojourn on earth the Lord Jesus was conscious of the dignity that was His, not only because of who He was, but also because He had been sent by His Father to do His will. He knew the true character of the prince of this world, whom he would meet and defeat, and knew all that He would have to endure before the victory was won. We learn something of this from Psalms 22:1-31, where the Lord cries, "Save me from the lion's mouth: for Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns" (Psalms 22:21).

David's weapons. Having put on the armour that Saul provided for him, David refused it as untried. Many centuries later the Apostle Paul also refused the weapons of the world saying, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4). God has armour for His saints, described in detail in Ephesians 6:11-19. David's weapons had been used in secret with God, and in the solitudes he had learned to rely on God, and that He could use to accomplish His will what would be viewed as foolish by the warriors of this world.

David therefore went forth, unarmed, so far as man could see, relying on God with his staff, his sling, and five smooth stones. There was no appearance of power in what David possessed, but his staff indicated that he leaned on a power that was not his own, His stones had not been fashioned on human anvils, but had been prepared by the work of God. The sling, which could hardly be called a weapon, was in its simplicity but the means used of God to bring down the embodiment of human strength and power. The strength of the giant was to be expressed by his sword and his spear, and his protection by his helmet of brass, his greaves of brass, his target of

brass, and the man that bore his shield; David's strength, and protection, were "in the Name of the Lord of hosts."

David's victory. When Goliath saw David come to meet him with only a staff in his hand, he said to him, "Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves?" He disdained David for his youth and lovely features, despised his weapons, cursed him by his gods, and threatened to give his flesh to the birds and wild beasts. All the power of the giant was marshalled, his weapons, his curses and his threats, but what could these avail against one protected by the Lord of hosts? When cursed and threatened by Goliath, David manifested his unbounded confidence in God in replying that his triumph over the giant would enable all the earth to know "that there is a God in Israel," and all present would know that "the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's." In delivering His people from the power and dread of their foes, the power and glory of their God would be proclaimed throughout the world (1 Samuel 17:46). In the case of David there was only the threat of death; but the Lord Jesus had to enter into death to overcome the enemy. To Jesus death was real, even the anticipation of it caused Him to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. He had to meet all the forces of evil face to face; all Satan's power; all that man could do to him, as energised or terrorised by Satan. He was mocked, spit upon, buffeted, reviled, insulted in every way, betrayed and forsaken by his disciples, unjustly condemned, falsely accused, scourged and crucified. After men had done their worst, He met the full force of divine wrath, being made sin and bearing our sins. Alone He sustained the judgment, and was crucified in weakness, but the strength of His love and compassions enabled Him to sustain all till the judgment was exhausted. It was in this way that the Son of God overcame the enemy.

It was through weakness that David conquered; the stone, so insignificant a weapon compared with the sword and spear of the giant, was directed of God to lay him low; then with his own sword Goliath was slain and beheaded. Little did the giant realise how his end would come! And was it not so with Satan? The proud enemy of God and of men saw all his forces assembled to meet Christ in the weakness of Manhood; he saw Him submit to all the indignities of the high priest's palace, of Herod and his men of war, and of Pilate's judgment hall; but how he must have been mystified by the hours of darkness on the cross. Then the Son of God entered the dark domain of death, that by which the devil had terrorised men; but it was impossible that He could be holden of death. The very weapon that made men tremble, the Lord Jesus used to defeat Satan, and break the power of death, for it is written, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

David's notable victory signified the most wonderful triumph of the universe, the triumph of weakness over Satan's power, the triumph of good over evil, and the triumph of divine love over all the hatred and malice of men and Satan. Very soon, in the day of His glory, the Lord Jesus will reign over the earth, all the kingdoms of the world subject to Him; and at the end He will entirely remove death by casting it into the lake of fire, and the eternal state, where righteousness shall dwell, will be the witness of God's triumph in Christ for the ages of ages.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Features of the Remnant

Features of the Remnant

Even in the darkest days of this world's history, God has had His faithful witnesses. Sometimes it has been a faithful individual, like Abel, Enoch, Noah or Abraham; sometimes it has been a remnant of God's people who, amidst the general departure from fidelity to God, have sought to be for His will and pleasure. In the faithful remnant God has indicated to us the features that He values, and these we, by His grace, can ever seek to emulate, whatever the character of the days in which we live. There can be little doubt that this our day is marked by serious departure from the truth given to the church, so that it becomes us to learn what God would have us be for Himself as the day of grace draws to its close. The days of Elijah were evil days. Of Ahab the king the Spirit of God has written, "But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols" (1 Kings 21:25-26). Elijah was an outstanding witness against the evil of the king, and of Israel, who followed in his steps. The numerous priests of Baal, and the manner of possessing the vineyard of Naboth, witness to the awful state of king, leaders and people.

After his faithful witness on Mount Cannel, Elijah fled on the threat of the wicked Jezebel, and at length arrived at Horeb to plead with God against Israel, saying, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (1 Kings 19:14). So much of this was true, but Elijah, wholly occupied with his own faithfulness to God was unable to take account of what was not hidden from the eye of God. Obadiah, and the hundred prophets of Jehovah whom he had delivered from the hand of Jezebel, were evidently not men of the same stamp as Elijah; they had not the same zeal for God, nor the same energy in testimony; nevertheless they were not to be numbered among those who had thrown down Jehovah's altars.

God had observed all that Elijah complained to Him of, and it would meet its judgment in His own time, appointing Elijah to anoint the executors of it; but He had also observed what was hidden from the prophet, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." Here was a faithful remnant unknown to Elijah who, in spite of all the evil and departure, had remained faithful to Jehovah in the midst of the idolatrous nation. The seven thousand faithful were not all prophets of Jehovah, though some of them may have been. They are not commended for standing by the side of Elijah in his faithful witness, nor for any outstanding deeds of valour in defence of the true worship of God; but God takes account of their refusal to bow before the false god of the king, or to give it the kiss of allegiance. We are not even told that their fidelity cost them anything, though we may rest assured that many of them, if not all, would have to suffer for being true to the God of Israel. The days of Malachi were not idolatrous like the days of Elijah, nevertheless they were days of departure from faithfulness to God, and the declension marked both priests and people. They offered polluted

bread on the altar of Jehovah, sacrificing the blind, the sick and the lame. They would not shut the doors of the temple or kindle the fire of the altar without payment, and their relations with each other were a reproach to Jehovah's Name. They were altogether insensible of their low moral state, and thought that God was indifferent to their shameful treatment of Him and His service.

Yet God has His faithful remnant in the midst of this general low moral condition, even as the prophet writes, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name" (Malachi 3:16). In a day when the fear of the Lord was given up this little remnant was marked by the fear of the Lord. The corrupt sacrifices evinced how far both priests and people had departed from the fear of the Lord. The respect and reverence for the service of God's house and of His altar had been cast aside, and this was reflected in the low moral condition of the lives of the people. The fear of the Lord was the bond that bound this remnant together, and they "spake often one to another." We are not told what the subject of their conversation was, but we can take it for granted that what engaged them was the interests of the Lord. They would mourn over the grave departure that marked the mass of the people, and speak of how they could best serve the will of the Lord in an evil day. Moreover, the goodness of God, and the Word of God, would of necessity occupy them as they spake together. Feeling the condition of things around evidently brought them together the oftener, for they spake often one to another. How very encouraging it is for saints of God to get together in an evil day, even as we are exhorted in Hebrews 10:25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . . and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Another mark of this remnant was that they thought upon the Name of the Lord. Our thoughts give character to our walk, and indeed manifest what we are, even as the Scripture says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." If we are thinking of the Name of the Lord, we shall endeavour to walk worthy of it, and eschew anything that would bring dishonour upon it. In Christianity the Name of the Lord is of supreme importance for our gatherings, "For where two or three are gathered together to My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). If we are thinking of the Name of the Lord in our gatherings, everything there will be in consonance with it. The days of the Lord's coming to this world were days of great religious pretension, but there was little for God in spite of the maintenance of the outward forms and ceremonies of the law. When tidings of the birth of Messiah came, through the wise men from the East, not only Herod the false king, but all Jerusalem, were troubled with him. Nevertheless, even as in former times, God had His remnant; those who were faithful to Him, and who truly cared for His interests.

Numbered among the faithful were the priest Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, who "were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). What pleasure there must have been for God in the blameless walk and the righteous lives of these devoted saints, as they sought to do God's will, and to act according to His revealed mind in the Holy Scriptures. We can take it for granted that Joseph and Mary were also of this devoted company, for Joseph is spoken of as a "righteous man" (Matthew 1:19); and both were favoured by visits from the Angel of the Lord.

Simeon and Anna were also of this little remnant. Of Simeon it is written, "the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him; and it was

revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:25-26). This aged saint was highly favoured with God's special revelation concerning His Christ. It was not to the High Priest, the chief priests or the leaders of Israel, that God made known His mind, but to one who was just and devout, and who was waiting for the fulfilment of God's promise in Christ. The aged Anna was a prophetess, "who departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." Her interests were wholly engaged with the things of God, refusing present things, and manifesting her constant dependence and confidence in God by her prayers by night and day. Had she been concentrating her thoughts on Malachi 3:1? "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple." If so, she was not disappointed, and was thus able to give "thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Anna evidently knew all who belonged to the remnant in Jerusalem, a company that was marked by their looking for the coming of the Lord, for He only could bring redemption for His people. The last days, the Scripture tells us, are "perilous times" for the people of God (2 Timothy 3:1), and are marked by professing Christians being "lovers of their own selves, covetous . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." In 2 Timothy the Lord has given instructions for the direction of those who would be faithful to Him in the midst of the corruption of professing Christendom. The true Christian is to separate himself from those who dishonour the holy name of the Lord, and to "follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:21-22). In the addresses to the seven churches in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22, the conditions depicted in the last four churches go on to the end, till the coming of the Lord. In Revelation 2:24, a remnant of Thyatira is addressed, and they are exhorted in the next verse, "But that which ye have, hold fast till I come." Spite of all the corruption in the Roman Catholic system, depicted by Thyatira, God has His faithful remnant, "as many as have not this doctrine," who were faithful to God according to their measure of light, and who received His approbation.

Sardis shows us what Protestantism became after the spiritual energy that marked the Reformation at the beginning had waned, until it could be described as having "a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Revelation 3:1). Such is Protestantism today! In name it stands for reality, but the mass are spiritually dead, though professing to be followers of Christ. Yet the Lord can say, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." What pleased the Lord was their having kept their garments clean where there was so much to defile. In Philadelphia the Lord takes account of what was pleasing to Him as the church progressed towards the close of its history on earth. He knew their works, and could say of them, "Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My Word, and hast not denied My Name." There was little to draw public attention to them, but the eye of the Lord was on them. Obedient to the word of The Holy and The True, and refusing to be identified with anything that would dishonour His Holy Name, the little remnant pursued its way with only Christ before it. Waiting for the coming of the Lord, to have their part in His heavenly kingdom they kept the word of His patience; and He promises them a rich reward in association with Him in the coming glory.

Laodicea is so objectionable to Christ, that He will spue it out of His mouth. Filled with their own self-importance; independent of Christ whom they put outside their door, and utterly insensible of their own miserable condition, the professing church blindly pursues its self-willed course to judgment. But the Lord has His remnant in the last days, even in the conditions described in

Laodicea. There are the faithful individuals who hear the Lord's voice as He stands outside knocking, and such know the joys of communion with Him, and have the prospect of sitting with Him in His throne, even as He overcame, and has sat down with His Father on His throne.

Whatever then the character of the days, God chooses for Himself those who are faithful. It has always been so, for He has not left Himself without witness. Such as have formed the remnants may have been very poor, and very feeble; but they have been chosen by the Lord for His own pleasure and to carry out His will. And what has been formerly will also be until the end. After the church has gone, there will be godly remnants in Israel for God's pleasure, and to do His bidding. If, on the one hand, they are the chosen of God; on the other hand, they are the faithful ones that God chooses. May God give us the desire to be numbered among His faithful remnant in this day.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. God's Glory — its Appearing, Departure and Return

God's Glory — its Appearing, Departure and Return

There is a feature of the divine glory that has ever been before the eyes of men, for "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Psalms 19:1). Yet all men do not discern in the wonders of creation the glory of God, even if "His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20) are there to make their unbelief of Him inexcusable. Those who study the stars may speak of the varied glories of the heavenly orbs, and be able to tell of their great discoveries, and yet may never think of Him whose glory is before their eyes, or discern the workmanship of Him who is omnipotent and omniscient, being ignorant of the creator who brought all into existence. Divinely given faith is needed to perceive the hand of God in creation, for says the Scripture, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Hebrews 11:3). The babe in the family of God is much better instructed as to the origin of creation than the greatest intellectual who knows not God.

God's Glory in the Tabernacle

Stephen informed the rulers of Israel that "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham" (Acts 7:2), and God called him to be the father of many nations, one of which was to have a special place of favour as His earthly people, and they would have the land into which Abraham had been called "for an everlasting possession" (Genesis 17:4-8). In due course, Israel were delivered out of Egypt by the mighty power of God, and brought to Himself at mount Sinai. On leaving Egypt the people were led by God, His presence among them being visible "in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night" (Exodus 13:17-22). When Pharaoh pursued the children of Israel, the pillar of cloud was a cloud of darkness to the hosts of Egypt, but it gave light to the hosts of Israel. When the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, it was against God they were complaining, but God in His grace answered their murmuring with the provision of flesh and manna, but also with the appearing of His glory (Exodus 16:2-10). God did not chide them for murmuring, but appeared in His glory to show His care for them in wondrous grace. It was not until the people had undertaken to keep the law that the glory of God brought terror to the hearts of Israel, when they heard the thunderings and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, and saw the lightnings from the cloud upon the mountain. It was a glory that struck the people with fear and made them tremble (Exodus 19:16). On the day the tabernacle was reared, "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34-35). God was signifying His intention to dwell with men, as His glory dwelt among Israel, but as seen in Moses, man under law was not able to draw nigh to God, to enter into the full blessedness of God's presence with them. The time will yet come when what was indicated that day will have its fulfilment, for it is written, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them . . . and be their God" (Revelation 21:3). God thus early in Israel's history made

known what will mark the eternal day, when the conditions of Revelation 21:4 will abide. In Leviticus 9:1-24, at the time of the consecration of the priests, on the eighth day, which looks forward to the millennium, after Moses and Aaron entered into the tabernacle, and came out to bless the people, "the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people," and fire from the Lord consumed the offerings, "which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces" (Leviticus 9:23-24). It was a blessed anticipation of what will happen when Israel are blessed of the Lord, the true King and Priest, set forth in Moses and Aaron, and when they realise that it is through the sacrifice of Christ that they are blessed of God.

Three times over in the Book of Numbers the glory of the Lord appeared in times of crisis; when the people refused the good news concerning the land of promise, and were about to stone Moses, Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 14:10); at the time of the rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16:19); and when the people chode with Moses because of the lack of water (Numbers 20:6). On the first occasion, the rebellion caused Moses and Aaron to fall on their faces before all the assembly, for the people "said one to another. Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt" (Numbers 14:4-5). God spoke of disinheriting Israel, but Moses interceded and they were spared, but Jehovah answered, "As I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Numbers 14:21), and this will certainly be fulfilled under the reign of Christ. As Israel behaved in the wilderness, so did they when they entered the land, the Book of Judges specially showing the awful failure of God's earthly people. Things had reached a very low ebb in the days of Eli, when the lamp of God went out at night, and the sons of Eli were rebellious and corrupt, inviting upon themselves and upon Israel the judgment of the holy God who had been so longsuffering with them. After being defeated by the Philistines, a chastisement from God, the people, the leaders of Israel and the priests were all involved in removing the ark of God from its resting place, and taking it into the battlefield without consulting their God. They looked upon the ark as a sacred charm, which they vainly imagined would enable them to defeat the hosts of the Philistines, but only to find that if God was not in all their thoughts, God would take the occasion to deal with His wayward people, and especially with the wickedness of the priests who had so gravely dishonoured His Name. When the news of the defeat of Israel, the capture of the ark of God, and the death of Hophni and Phinehas reached Eli, he fell and died. On hearing the tidings, the wife of Phinehas gave birth to a child, and also died, but before she died she called the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken" (1 Samuel 4:17-22). After much long-suffering with the evil of His people, and with the sons of Eli, Jehovah allowed the enemy to take the ark, the symbol of His presence, but as the Philistines were soon to learn, God could safeguard His glory even in the midst of the enemies of His people.

God's Glory in the Temple

There are few mentions of God's glory between the time of its last appearance in the wilderness, as mentioned in Numbers 20:1-29, and its filling the temple in 1 Kings 8:1-66. Moses had recalled the appearance of the glory of God to Israel at Sinai (Deuteronomy 5:24), Hannah had spoken of "the throne of glory" in her prayer (1 Samuel 2:8), and the wife of Phinehas had spoken of its departure with the capture of the ark by the Philistines. This solemn event of the ark being lost to Israel is again brought before us in Psalms 78:1-72, where idolatry is given as the reason for God acting. He "forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand" (Psalms 78:58-61). The psalm

confirms the discernment of the wife of Phinehas in pronouncing the departure of the glory.

Having forsaken Shiloh on account of the sins of His people, God chose David and then Solomon to sit upon the throne of Israel, and Solomon, acting on the desires divinely implanted in the heart of David, built the temple in Jerusalem for the God of Israel. When the temple had been completed, and the ark of God brought into its resting place, when the priests were come out of the holy place, "the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:6-11). God's glory had returned into the midst of His people, but as when Moses pitched the tabernacle, no one could remain where the glory was, for under law there was no approach to God in His glory. Still, it was a day of gladness for Israel, and a memorable day in their history.

If there was pleasure for Israel in having God with them in His house in Jerusalem, there was also delight for the heart of Jehovah, even as it is written, "For the Lord hath chosen Zion: He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell: for I have desired it" (Psalms 132:13-14). In Psalms 29:1-11, David calls for glory to be given unto the Lord as he reviews His greatness as seen in the mighty thunder storms, then says, "and in His temple doth every one speak of His glory" (Psalms 29:9). It is one thing to see the glory of God in His acts in the creation, and another to know His glory as dwelling in the midst of His people.

Alas! the people of God with God's glory in His temple were no different from what they had been when the glory was in the tabernacle. The corruption of the priests was prominent when the glory departed from the tent at Shiloh, and the corruption of the kings of Israel and Judah played a large part in causing the glory to depart from the house of God in Jerusalem. Solomon, who had built the temple, was the first of the kings to introduce idolatry (1 Kings 11:1-8), bringing upon himself and upon his people the anger of a holy and jealous God.

Because of Solomon's idolatry the kingdom was divided (1 Kings 11:11-13), and on its division, the first king to reign over the ten tribes introduced the worship of the golden calves, repeating the sin of Israel at the foot of Sinai. Jeroboam's successors were no better than he was, for they followed his idolatrous ways, and this brought about the captivity of Israel (2 Kings 17:1-23). There were good kings in the line of David, but king Ahaz brought again idolatry among his people, and until the final judgment upon Judah, only the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah relieved the dark picture of wickedness against the God of Israel, who had with long patience waited upon the repentance of His people, which was refused Him. When there was no remedy but judgment, God brought the forces of the king of Babylon against Judah and led His people into captivity. The departure of God's glory from the temple is solemnly narrated by the prophet Ezekiel, who was "among the captives by the river of Chebar" (Ezekiel 1:1). Step by step the glory of God departs slowly from His house, seen in vision by the prophet, manifesting the reluctance of God to leave the midst of His people where He had dwelt. The glory left the holiest of all, and departed to "the threshold of the house" (Ezekiel 9:3; Ezekiel 10:4), then it departed from the threshold of the house, "and stood over the cherubims . . . at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house" (Ezekiel 10:18-19), and the last sight of the divine glory at the time of its departure is when "the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city" (Ezekiel 11:23). How good it was that the prophet in the opening chapter was able to record that "upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness of the appearance of a man," and that in His

safekeeping was "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (Ezekiel 1:26-28). Can we not discern in the symbols given that the glory of God, which had been so gravely dishonoured by Israel, was secure in the Man of God's purpose in heaven? God's glory that is now seen in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6), will yet return to fill the house of God on earth, and this the prophet sees in vision in Ezekiel 43:1-5. At the time of which Ezekiel writes, the glory will not only fill the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, but there will be the fulfilment of the Lord's words in Numbers 14:21, "As I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." The Glory of the Only-Begotten

If the glory of God departed from the temple when Israel and Judah were led captive, it came to earth again in the Person of the blessed Son of God. In Jesus the divine glory was not seen as Israel saw it at Sinai, nor as filling the tabernacle and the temple when no one could draw near, but it was manifested in the moral excellencies of the Son of God, and in the "glory as of an only begotten with a father" full of grace and truth. The natural man was unable to discern the divine glory, but the disciples of the Lord contemplated it (John 1:14), seeing by faith the divine glory that was hidden to natural eyes in the veil of His Manhood. The cloud of the divine glory that Ezekiel had last seen, at the time of its departure, standing upon the mountain on the east side of the city, was seen by three of the Lord's disciples on the "holy mount" when Jesus was transfigured before them. There was the out-shining of the glory of the Son of Man in that wondrous spectacle, but there was also the cloud from which the Father's voice was heard, and into which Moses and Elias entered. Moses, when on earth, was not able to enter the tabernacle because of the presence of God's glory, but now, with Elias, he is able to enter into the cloud of glory (Luke 9:28-35). This was a preview of the coming kingdom of the Son of Man, when "He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26).

Alas! the divine glory, seen in its moral excellence in the Son of God, and the divine glory that was present in Him, but which only anointed eyes could see, like the glory of the tabernacle and the glory of the temple, was compelled to depart on account of the evil in God's earthly people, evil that rose to its height in the rejection and crucifixion of Him in whom all glory dwells. The same divine reluctance to leave His people as was manifested when the glory left in the days of Ezekiel, is seen in Jesus, as He says, "how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (Luke 13:34).

If the glory of God departed from the earth when Jesus was slain, it was seen soon after by Stephen when he looked up to heaven and said, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55-56). It was also seen by Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus, and it gave character to his preaching, as is seen in his letter to the Corinthians, especially in 2 Corinthians 3:1-18; 2 Corinthians 4:1-18.

Soon the glory will return, as predicted by the Lord in Luke 9:26, glory that will destroy His enemies (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9), and in which He will be admired in all them that believe. The divine glory will be displayed in the church in the millennial day, and also in the "world without end" (Revelation 21:10-11; Ephesians 3:21). What was seen in the tabernacle will have its fulfilment when the tabernacle of God is with men (Revelation 21:3), for His original thought and desire were expressed when His glory filled the tabernacle.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. God's Pleasure in Intercession.

God's Pleasure in Intercession.

Isaiah 53:12. The closing phrase of this remarkable chapter is "He made intercession for the transgressors," and it is a prophecy of the cry of the Lord Jesus on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Because of these words, the nation of Israel was accounted as having slain Christ in ignorance, even as Peter said in Acts 3:17, "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." Those who repented, and turned to God, were treated as the manslayer of old; they were allowed into the city of refuge God had provided. This we have in the Epistle to the Hebrews; "We might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus" (Hebrews 6:18-20). After the rejection of the testimony of the Holy Spirit, the nation, as such, is treated differently. Stephen, at the close of his solemn address, says, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before the coming of the Just One; of Whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:51-52). While the guilty nation passed on to its judgment, when Jerusalem was razed to the ground, those who fled for refuge found a sure and stedfast hope in Christ risen and glorified at God's right hand.

Abraham's intercession for Sodom, recorded in Genesis 18:1-33, must have given pleasure to the heart of God. How touching are the words in which the Spirit of God has penned this for us, "And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt Thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? — Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the Lord said. If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." Then Abraham proceeds to intercede, bringing the number down to forty-five, to forty, to thirty, to twenty, and finally to ten. Never once is he discouraged by God. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and when we read Abraham's intercession in the light of the Lord's intercession on the cross, we can realise that God must have delighted in it. Lot could not intercede with God as did Abraham; he did not know what it was to draw near to God; he was too deeply involved in Sodom's affairs to have communion with God. We cannot intercede with God on behalf of evildoers unless we are separate from them, and know the intimacy of communion with God. The intercession of Abraham did not save Sodom, for there were not even ten righteous within the city; but the intercession of Moses for guilty Israel had different results. While Moses had been communing with God on the mount, learning His mind about the tabernacle, Israel were corrupting themselves in idolatrous worship at the foot of the mountain. They had bound themselves in a covenant of blood to keep the whole law, and so soon after they had broken the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." God said to Moses, "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them: and I will make of thee a great nation" (Exodus 32:10). How great was the mercy of God that stopped to consider the feelings of His

servant in this great crisis. He knew well what the thoughts and desires of Moses would be; He already feels the pleadings of the heart of His dear devoted servant before they are uttered, for He says, "Let Me alone." Israel's sin had called down upon them the righteous anger of a holy God, but intercession caused mercy to be mingled with judgment.

How unselfish is Moses! God's purposes concerning His people could still have been fulfilled in the children of Moses; His promises would not have fallen to the ground; but Moses manifests his unselfish care of those committed to his trust by Jehovah: he would not be made a great nation at the expense of poor sinful Israel; he was not an ambitious man, but the meekest man in all the earth, with low thoughts of self. He reminds Jehovah of how He had brought Israel out of Egypt with great power, and would not have the Egyptians say, "For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains." Then he reminds God of the oath to Abraham, Isaac and Israel. Was not this wonderful? A man pleading with God to turn from His fierce wrath, and God listening to the intercession of His creature, with the result that "The LORD repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people." When Moses returned to God's presence after seeing the sin and nakedness of the people, he said, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold." There was no endeavour to minimise the seriousness of the offence, but he pleads with God to forgive them. He realised that God was righteous and holy, and that He could not overlook the enormity of Israel's transgression and rebellion against Him. Therefore he offers to stand in the breach, so as to bear the weight of the divine judgment himself. But, great and devoted as Moses was, he could never be acceptable with God as a sacrifice for sin. Only One, the blessed Son of God, Jesus Christ the Righteous, could stand before God as a sacrifice for sins; and having completed the glorious work of redemption, He is our subsisting righteousness in the presence of God. Yet how great must have been the pleasure of God in hearing Moses thus offer himself as a substitute for sinful Israel. It was a faint foreshadowing of the deep feelings of the heart of Christ, Who said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God — sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law."

Another delightful case of intercession is that of Job's. Satan had moved God against this righteous man, to destroy him without cause, and God had allowed Satan to take away all his children, and all his possessions; yet the response to all this evil from this "perfect and upright" man is, "Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the LORD" (Job 1:20-21). At the second attack of Satan, when he is covered with boils, and sitting among the ashes, his wife says, "Curse God and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (Job 2:9-10).

Three friends came to mourn with Job and to comfort him, but alas, they knew not what had taken place when Satan had presented himself among the sons of God in the presence of Jehovah. They knew not that God had said, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" They told Job of their great knowledge and experience, and concluded that Job must really have been a wicked man to bring down such judgments upon his head. Their false reasonings provoked Job to

say many things, and to protest his integrity. Ultimately God intervenes, and Job confesses to Him, "I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not — 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 42:3; Job 42:5-6). But God had something to say to the three friends who had so falsely accused His tried servant. He said to Eliphaz, "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept." What a great favour God conferred on His servant in enabling him to intercede for those who had so greatly abused him, and in accepting his intercession on their behalf. God would have no pleasure in punishing the three self-confident friends of the patriarch, but what pleasure He would have in listening to his prayer for them. And how good for us to see how God connects Job's intercession with his return to prosperity, for we read, "And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10). Earlier, Job had known what it was to offer burnt offerings for his sons, lest perchance they had cursed God in their hearts (Job 1:5); now he was an intercessor with a God he had learned in a new way, One Who spoke to him, and Whom he had seen. Without doubt, God would have pleasure in the sacrifices made for his sons; but how much greater the pleasure in the intercession from a heart that knew Him as Job now did. In the New Testament, where Stephen so blessedly reflects the features and grace of his Master, at the time of his martyrdom, we have another lovely example of intercession. At the beginning of his address, "All that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." What a rebuke this should have been for those who falsely accused him of speaking blasphemous words against the law (Acts 6:13-15). The law had been given by a ministry of angels, as Stephen later reminds them; and the look on the face of Stephen was their condemnation, for they had not kept the law which they professed to administer. It was the consciousness of their guilt in this very thing, of which they falsely accused Stephen, that produced the gnashing of their teeth. They had not kept the law; they had slain the prophets who foretold Christ's coming: they had betrayed and murdered the Just One; and they had rejected the testimony of the Holy Spirit. What a solemn list of crimes against the leaders of the favoured nation! Instead of repenting, they are cut to the heart, and manifest their deadly hatred against the servant of the Lord.

Full of the Holy Ghost, Stephen now looks stedfastly into heaven, reminding us of the Lord Himself, although in a different scene, where, in John 17:1-26, we read, "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven." In heaven, Stephen saw "The glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." What a sight to strengthen the Lord's servant for the closing moments of his life and testimony on earth! His testimony was brief and simple, but how much it contained: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." This was the Spirit's witness to the One they had betrayed and murdered: God had given to Him the highest place in heaven. They cried out with a loud voice to drown the testimony of the Spirit of God; they stopped their ears, for they had no desire to hear it; and in an endeavour to silence forever what God was saying, they ran upon His witness with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him. Like his Master, he sealed his testimony with his blood; as Hebrews puts it, resisting "unto blood, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:4). When all was over for the Lord Jesus, on the cross, He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit and Stephen, coming

out like his Master, calls upon God, "and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." But the last words of Stephen reflect again so beautifully his Master's spirit, when he cries "with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Had not Jesus said, on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do? How wonderful the intercession of the Lord for His enemies! how great the grace given to His servant Stephen to reflect His moral glory in similar circumstances. The Lord Jesus not only died to make propitiation for sins; He also died as a martyr; and in this latter way, His servants can follow Him, even unto death. What deep pleasure there must have been for God and for the Lord in the intercession of Stephen! He could not say, as the Lord said, "They know not what they do;" yet he prayed for his murderers.

What marked the servants of the Lord we have considered, is to mark the saints in this day. No doubt Abraham, Moses, Job and Stephen, were outstanding men of God; but the privilege that was theirs as intercessors is open to all the saints of God today. This we have in 1 Timothy 2:1, where Paul says, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." Paul knew what was "good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:1-16; 1 Timothy 4:1-16). His desire for the blessing of his brethren, after the flesh, was so great that he wrote, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." This was the spirit manifested in Moses when he interceded, saying, "If Thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written" (Exodus 32:32).

If however we are to intercede, we must be in a suitable moral condition for it. Is not this why the Apostle says in 1 Timothy 2:8, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting?"

Women can pray, but not "everywhere" as men can; in public they are to "learn in silence" (1 Timothy 2:11). Lot could not intercede like Abraham for Sodom; he could not lift up holy hands when his hands had been linked with the sinners of Sodom. Those who are immersed in the affairs of the world, or engaged with its pleasures, are not in the moral condition suitable for intercession. Abraham had been in the path of separation, and in communion with God: Moses had been on the mount with God, and morally apart from the guilty nation; Job was perfect, upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil; one who had come through the furnace of affliction to purge him from all the dross of self-righteousness; Stephen was "full of the Holy Ghost," and occupied with the Son of God in heaven. These are the features that will enable us to be true intercessors with God on behalf of others. Where was Aaron when Israel sinned? Was he not the High Priest ordained for the work of intercession? Alas! alas! he allowed himself to become involved in the people's sin, for which he had to be rebuked by Moses. Where were the High Priest and the chief priests, when the Lord Jesus was apprehended? As one has said, "Instead of pleading for the guilty, they are found pleading against the guiltless." So often those who should be interceding with God are so defiled, and unconscious of it, that they are utterly unfit to plead with God on behalf of others. God will not listen to us interceding "if our heart condemn us;" that is if we have a bad conscience; but "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John 3:20-21). The prayer and supplication of Daniel (Daniel 9:1-27) is full of instruction for us on this subject. He was intelligent in the mind of God through His word (Daniel 9:2); he had the true attitude of heart in approaching God (Daniel 9:3); he first confesses his own sins, then says "we have sinned" (Daniel

9:4-15); then supplicates God on behalf of Jerusalem.

Coming now to our verse in Isaiah 53:1-12, Jehovah says of the Lord Jesus, "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong." This day is yet in prospect, it is the day of Christ's glory, for which we wait in patience. In this wonderful chapter, the prophet has seen Him "despised and rejected of men;" now Jehovah divides Him a portion with the great. Who are the great? Are they the great men of this world? Nay, they are those who, like their Master, have been "despised and rejected of men." And who are the strong with whom He shall divide the spoil? They are "the weak" that God has chosen "to confound the mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). What a day will that be for Christ when "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

Then we have God's reason for giving Christ the supreme place in the glory and triumphs of the coming day. First, "He hath poured out His soul unto death." Secondly "He was numbered with the transgressors." Thirdly, "He bare the sin of many." Finally, He "made intercession for the transgressors." The first speaks of the deep sorrow of His heart; the second of the shame of the cross; the third of the judgment He bore for our sins; the last of the intercession through which God was able to take account of Israel's sin as a sin of ignorance, rather than as a wilful sin, for which there was no sacrifice. Is it any wonder that God is going to give a public answer to the cross? All the deep sorrow of His heart will find an answer in the supreme joy of "that day." The shame of the cross has already an answer in glory, but He will be publicly seen in the coming day, not with "transgressors" with whom men numbered Him, but with the "many sons" He has brought to glory, "the great" and "the strong." The many, whose sins He bore, will be with Him, to share His joy and His glory, every one in a robe spotless white, made meet for His companionship through His death for them. His intercession for the transgressors crowns this wonderful picture. It was after Jesus said "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," that we read of the dying malefactor saying to his fellow, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss;" adding, "Lord remember me when thou comest into Thy kingdom." His intercession was speedily efficacious for that poor sinner, who entered with Him that day into the Paradise of God, and shall indeed be remembered in His kingdom glory. But how great the pleasure for the Father when His Son interceded for the transgressors, even for those engaged in His crucifixion. What a great company shall surround Christ in the day of His glory, every one there because He said, "Father forgive them." But the intercession of Christ has not ceased! On His Father's throne, while awaiting the day of sitting on His own throne, Christ intercedes for His saints, even as we read, "Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34).

Wm. C. Reid.

S. He is altogether lovely!" No. 1

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Solomon's divinely given wisdom was expressed in many ways. The Queen of Sheba was entranced when she saw "The house that he had built, the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers . . . and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD" (1 Kings 10:1-29). He answered all her enigmas, confounded the evildoer with his judgment; "He spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five." Many of these proverbs have been left in the divine record, but of his many songs we have but one, called by the Spirit of God, "The Song of Songs." This remarkable composition, indited by the Spirit of God, though clearly bringing out the divine wisdom deposited in the vessel, is the expression of love, and of a love that transcends what is natural, because it presents to us the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and the response to that love from the hearts of those that God has enabled to discern and value the loveliness of Christ. This precious song no doubt portrays Christ's love for His earthly people Israel, but it can also be applied to the church which Christ loved, and for which he gave Himself. Moreover, the individual saint of God knows Christ as his Beloved, and knows what it is to be loved by Christ, even as John could refer to himself as "The disciple whom Jesus loved," and as Paul could say, "The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me." There is no appreciation of Christ's love by the nation of Israel in this day, for "Praise waiteth for thee in silence, O God, in Zion" (Psalms 65:1), but there is a response from the heart of the church today, and from the hearts of the individual saints who have been redeemed to God by His precious blood. The bride in the 5th Chapter of this book had charged the daughters of Jerusalem to tell her Beloved, if they found Him, that she was love-sick. On receiving such a charge, the daughters of Jerusalem give the repeated challenge, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?" What would our reply be to such a challenge? What have we discerned in Christ, the well-beloved Son of God, who came in grace to bring to us the knowledge of God, and who died to bring us into divine favour? Our reply could not surpass our appreciation of the greatness, glory and perfections of Jesus. Yet the Lord delights to have a response from our poor hearts, no matter how feeble it may be, even as Jehovah was pleased to accept the burnt-offerings of Israel, even if the offerer could only bring a turtle-dove or a young pigeon. We can express to others our appreciation of Him, even as exhorted by the Apostle Paul, "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (2 Corinthians 10:17).

"My Beloved is white and ruddy."

Receiving such a challenge, the bride is not slow to tell out the perfections of the One she loves. First of all she gives a general description of Him, then enters into details in support of what she has spoken. Her opening words speak of His purity and freshness, and her heart delights to call attention to these choice features. As white, she discerns His unsullied purity, for He was the "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." In passing through this defiling scene He touched the leper, yet was not contaminated. The repelling power of His intrinsic holiness kept the

polluting influence of sin far from Him, yet He could receive sinners and eat with them. Sin's ravages in this poor world brought grief to His holy soul, but its corrupting power, which had wrought in the nature of every other man, could not touch Him. What rest of soul for those who know Jesus to be engaged with the perfection of His holiness and purity. Naturally we shrink from what is pure, because of our sinful nature, but the divine nature within, through the new birth, delights and rests in chastity and holiness. With His purity there was the freshness and beauty that marked Jesus in all His ways. The Spirit of God records that David was ruddy, when Samuel came to anoint him; it made him attractive in the eyes of Samuel, but because he was ruddy he was despised by Goliath (1 Samuel 16:12; 1 Samuel 17:42). The Nazarites of Zion "Were more ruddy in body than rubies" (Lamentations 4:7); they were the choice of God's earthly people. There was an attractiveness about Jesus that drew men to Him, and a peculiar attractiveness that held His disciples, and bound them in true affection to Him. Mothers brought their children to Him; the erstwhile sinner kissed and anointed His feet in Simon's house: and the woman of Sychar said to the men of her city. "Come see a Man that told me all things that ever I did." None could hold the heart of Simon Peter like Jesus? When others turned back, he said "Lord, to whom shall we go?" It was the attractiveness of Jesus that brought John to lie in His bosom, and that made Mary Magdalene say, "If thou hast borne Him hence. tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." And how Jesus draws His loved ones now by the charm of His grace, and the attraction of His Person.

"The chiefest among ten thousand."

Supreme among men, because of who He is, and because of what He is in His deep perfections, there is none to compare with Jesus. When we recall the greatest and most remarkable of men, we remember the words of the Psalmist, "Verily every man at his best is altogether vanity" (Psalms 39:1-13). All have come from sinful Adam, from the man who is of the earth, but He was a Man out of heaven. The Son of God has companions, called in divine grace to this wondrous place, but "He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows." He is the Firstborn among many brethren, transcending all because He is the only-begotten of the Father's bosom, because of all He has accomplished for the glory of God and for the blessing of His own, and because of His Personal intrinsic excellence. Jesus is the Chiefest among those with whom God has surrounded Him; the great men of earth are not worthy to be found in His company; He is not compared with them, for He stands out in His supremacy in marked contrast to all who have been acclaimed by the men of this world. The great of earth have trampled on their foes and on their fellows, wading deep in human blood to achieve their ambitions and attain the fame and glory of this world; in marked contrast, the Son of God "humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," shedding His own precious blood for the sins of others. The world's philosophers, ignorant of God, and glorying in their independence. have spun from their hearts and minds theories and ideas for which they have received the adulation of their fellows; but the Lord Jesus came with the true knowledge of God, calling attention to the Father, and saying, "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me" (John 7:16). Among men there is none to compare with Him; in the circle of His own He stands supreme, the admired object of every adoring heart that has the privilege to be there; and soon He will be surrounded by the heavenly hosts proclaiming His worthiness (Revelation 5:1-14).

"His head is as the most fine gold."

Three times in these verses is gold used in the detailed description of the Beloved. His head is the finest gold. His hands are gold rings, and His legs are like pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold. When it is His head, which brings His blessed Person before us, it is of the finest gold; where it is His walk, it is fine gold, and where it is His work, it is gold.

How aptly does the finest gold portray the supreme glory of the Son of God. The most glorious kingdom that was ever seen upon earth was given in a divinely sent vision as a "Head of fine gold," and to the great Gentile monarch, Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel said, "Thou art this head of gold" (Daniel 2:32; Daniel 2:38). Here is One who will not only possess all the kingdoms of this world in a coming day, but of whom the Scripture says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Psalms 45:6). It was the delight of God's servants to present Jesus in His glory, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews showing Him as the brightness of God's glory, and the expression of His substance, proclaiming Him as creator and "Upholding all things by the word of His power." We can understand on reading the opening chapters of John's Gospel, and Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, that these two outstanding servants of the Lord rejoiced to show us, by the Spirit of God, some of the features of the "Head of finest gold." And if it was the privilege of the Apostles to speak of the glories of the Son of God, it is our privilege to be occupied with them, so that we can adore Him in whom they shine, and speak of them in praise and in worship.

"His locks are bushy, and black as a raven."

Christ's Manhood is seen in His flowing locks, and is emphasised by their being black. Long hair belonged normally to the woman, who had from God the place of subjection. The Nazarite, who separated himself "Unto the LORD" (Numbers 6:2) must needs "Let the locks of the hair of his head grow." How wonderful that the Eternal Son of God should come into Manhood, into the place of subjection, to be the True Nazarite, and to become "Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." As God, He had ever commanded, as Man "Yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." Gladly did the Son come to do the Father's will; to do His good pleasure was His delight, even if it meant infinite sorrow and suffering to secure what lay in the counsels of the Father. His Manhood was real, as Scripture is careful to safeguard. John, who in his Gospel records that "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us," writes in his first epistle, "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." It was so real that it could be written, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same, wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren" (Hebrews 2:14; Hebrews 2:17). Having come into the servant's place. He has chosen to remain in it forever, as pre-figured in the Hebrew servant who was to plainly say. "I love my Master, my wife and my children, I will not go out free." Therefore when we are brought in spirit to the threshold of eternity, when all things shall be subdued to God, "Then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28). The blackness of His locks is in marked contrast to what is revealed concerning Him in Daniel 7:1-28 where, as "The Ancient of days . . . whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool" He is seen as the One whose goings forth were of old, even from eternity. Now He is Man, no grey hairs are on Him; all the freshness and vigour that belonged to Him down here is unimpaired by all that He has passed through. Vigour and zeal characterized Him, but not in the bustling haste that marks the flesh, but in innumerable works of which the Spirit of God has recorded, "If they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not

contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25). Although Christ has become Man, and our souls delight in Him with His flowing locks as black as a raven, yet we remember who He is in the greatness of His Person, unchanged and unchangeable. Therefore when Jesus is seen by John in vision, "Like unto the Son of Man . . . His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." The Son of Man is still the "Ancient of days."

"His eyes as of doves by the rivers of waters."

What meekness and gentleness were expressed in Jesus! There is nothing harmful about the dove; it is the symbol of peace, and is without guile. Such were the eyes of the Beloved as He looked upon the one He loved. The eyes not only take cognisance of all that is without: they are the windows into the soul, and from which the soul looks out. Human character, disposition, and the deepest feelings of the heart may be clearly expressed and read in the eyes. How the Lord looks with love and tenderness upon the objects of His affections! His delight in them is not only expressed in words, but in the way He looks upon them; and nearness to Him enables us to understand and appreciate His thought of His own. His eyes were not as doves when Jehovah "In the morning watch . . . looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host" (Exodus 14:24); nor when "He looked with anger" upon those who would accuse Him for His works of grace and power (Mark 3:5). Nor does the professing church escape the searching, penetrating gaze of the Son of Man whose "Eyes were as a flame of fire" (Revelation 1:14; Revelation 2:18). It is the same blessed Person, perfect in every situation, whether in the defence of His people against their oppressors, or angry because of the hardness of heart that would hinder His grace, or refusing all that is inconsistent with divine holiness in that which professes His Name, or looking in tender affection upon those for whom He has given Himself. By the rivers of waters the doves would rest in quiet content, cleansed and refreshed. And can we not say that the look of Jesus brings rest, contentment, cleansing and refreshment to us. There is not only what His look tells us of the deep feelings of His heart, but what that look does to His loved ones. This is illustrated for us in the look He gave Peter after he had denied that he knew Him. Poor Peter was broken down! But what cleansing it brought to his soul. It was not a look of anger or accusation, but of compassion and pity.

"washed with milk and fitly set." When anything enters the eye and causes irritation, there is an old remedy washing with milk. There was nothing of natural irritation about the look of Jesus. even when He looked with anger on those who despised His grace; nor is there when He looks upon His saints, even in their greatest failures. There is a calmness and serenity belonging to Christ that nothing can disturb. When about to leave this world, He said to His own, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." The look of peace gives us peace; it expresses what is in His heart — a peace that nothing can disturb; and it brings the sense of peace into our hearts.

We cannot think of the eyes that were washed with milk without thinking of them as once filled with tears. How deeply the Son of God felt the refusal by men of the grace He brought, and His rejection by His own people Israel. But His tears flowed for them, not for Himself. As He wept, He said, "If thou hadst known . . . the things which belong unto thy peace . . ." He sorrowed over their great loss, for they had rejected the blessings of divine grace that God's counsels had prepared for them, and because of this an awful judgment awaited the favoured and guilty city of Jerusalem. Nor can we ever forget the tears of Jesus at the grave of Lazarus, when He sorrowed with the

bereaved sisters, and His spirit was troubled by the ravages of sin in this world and among those He loved.

Looking upon His loved ones with eyes of love, the Son of God knows everything about them, for His eyes are "Fitted set" in the head of the finest gold. We have been brought into nearness to Christ, and into relationship with Him, where we can enjoy His perfect love, but we must never forget who He is in His Person, in all the greatness and glory that are His as the Eternal Son. The Queen in Psalms 45:1-17 was arrayed in all the glory of the King, and she was attractive to Him in her beauty, but while conscious of what she was to Him, she was not to forget who He was; "He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him." Christ's love for us is a divine love, and all His thoughts and feelings for His own are perfect and divine, and this infinite and eternal love, and all His desires concerning them, are expressed in the eyes that look out upon us from the head of the finest gold.

"He is altogether lovely!" No. 2. When the Lord Jesus was upon earth, both at the waters of baptism, and on the glory mount, the Father's voice was heard declaring His pleasure in His well-beloved Son. Throughout the pages of Holy Writ, both in the Old and New Testaments, the Holy Spirit of God delights to engage us with the glories and perfections of Jesus. How great then is the privilege given to the saints of God to speak of Him, even as the bride speaks of her Beloved in the Song of Songs, describing His deep perfections under the influence of the Spirit of God. To the saints, there is no one like Jesus: He stands alone in His unique glory, and when seen among those God has given Him as companions, He is the Chiefest, "The Firstborn among many brethren." He is supreme because of who He is, and because of what He is; yet in wondrous grace He has become Man, and looks upon His own in tenderness and grace, loving them with a love that is divine.

"His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers."

Natural beauty, in its attractiveness and charm, is written on the cheeks; but the beauty of the Lord Jesus could not be discerned by men naturally. The eyes of the heart had to be opened to behold "His cheeks as a bed of spices." He grew up before the Father as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground, but the language of Israel was. "There is no beauty that we should desire Him." There was a little remnant whose eyes were divinely opened, and they beheld His beauty. The aged Simeon could say, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation," as he looked upon the Babe, Jesus, and "Anna . . . spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." They discerned the peculiar beauty of the "Tender plant." The fragrance of the bed of spices delighted the hearts of the disciples, telling Peter, through the Father's revelation, that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God. But what was so attractive to those drawn to the Son by the Father, was hateful to the men of this world, so that the Lord had to say of them. "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father." There are beautiful features in natural character which, although defiled by sin, can yet be discerned. They were seen by the Lord in the man who had kept the law from his youth, and it is written, "Jesus beholding him, loved him" (Mark 10:21). The graces of Christ are of a higher order than the sweetest graces of nature; they are like "Raised beds of sweet plants." Meekness, lowliness and gentleness are beautiful to see in men, but how exalted were these features in Him, "Who being in the form of God, made Himself of no reputation . . . humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Php 2:6-8). The lovely traits of the divine nature are to be seen in the lives of the saints as they walk in the Spirit,

but they were seen in their fulness and perfection in Jesus.

Although the Jews did not discern the divine glory of the Son or appreciate His moral perfections, yet He said to them, "Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am." Blinded by sin, they had rejected Him, the sweet fragrance of His grace being to them like "A savour of death unto death." Such was their hatred that they smote "The judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek." But even the expression of their hatred brought out the perfections of His holy nature; for in His sorrows the sweet spices were most fragrant: human enmity and malice could not hinder the diffusion of the odour from heaven that belonged to the Man out of heaven. How richly were His sweet graces shed forth when He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheek to them that plucked off the hair (Isaiah 1:1-31; Isaiah 6:1-13).

"His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh." The words of Jesus were altogether pure, being the expression of what He was Himself. When the Jews asked Him, "Who art thou?" He replied, "Altogether that which I also say unto you." The purity and beauty of the lily are not only to be seen when it is considered by itself; these lovely features often stand out in contrast to its surroundings, even as is written in Song of Solomon 2:2, "As the lily among thorns." How different were the words of Jesus from those of the leaders of this world! Sometimes the Scribes spoke the words of Moses, but their works were in marked contrast: their words were not the expression of themselves: there was not the purity of the lily about them. When the Pharisees endeavoured to entangle the Lord in His talk, when they asked if it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not, were their words not like thorns?

There were no thorns in His words when He spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth. for they "All bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." Grace was poured into His lips from the inner springs of His being; His words were not only the revelation of God's grace, but the expression of His own deep feelings of compassion for men. How sweet the smell of the myrrh in the words of love spoken by the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." His words were not like those of men who had "The poison of asps under their lips"; nor like the false teachers of whom the Apostle Peter speaks, who would "Speak great swelling words of vanity" and "Through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you."

Myrrh was one of the "Principal spices," found in the holy anointing oil of the High Priest, and on the garment of Jehovah's King in Psalms 45:1-17. The fragrance that belongs to Him as Priest in heaven now, and that shall be found in Him as King when He returns, is the same fragrance that came out in His words of grace as the Man of Sorrows on earth. Wine mingled with myrrh was given to the Lord on the cross; a mixture of myrrh and aloes was brought by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus for the burial of Jesus, and myrrh was one of the gifts brought by the wise men from the East when Jesus was born. How fragrant was Christ in every circumstance down here, from His birth until found in death for the pleasure of God: fragrant to His God and Father, and fragrant to those who have learned, as taught of God, to appreciate His moral perfections. In the 5th verse of our chapter, the bride finds myrrh on her hands and fingers after touching the door where her Beloved had been. What had been found on the lock of the door she now discovers dropping from His lips.

"His hands gold rings, set with the beryl."

How blessed it is for us to contemplate the Son of God as loved of the Father, who has "Given all things into His hand" (John 3:35). Having received all from the Father, He wrought in this world to secure all that lay in the Father's counsels. With this before Him, He said. "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). His was indeed a divine work, as signified by the gold; He wrought in divine righteousness, bringing glory to God and blessing to men. All His work was because of the Father, even as He said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). God's rest had been broken by the entry of sin into the world, and the Father commenced to work afresh, not to repair the damage done in the old creation, but to bring in a new creation that never could be marred or touched by sin. It was in relation to this great new creation work that the Son of God was found as a workman in this world. Does not the ring speak of what has no end? All the works of the Son of God will abide for ever! When the Messiah of Israel was crucified, it seemed as if He had laboured in vain, and spent His strength for naught, and in vain (Isaiah 49:4): but that which appeared to bring His work to nothing was the very means that God used to secure His counsels of eternal blessing and glory. When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven, "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thessalonians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:10). Christ is building His assembly, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail; and this same assembly is to be the vessel for the eternal display of the glory of God (Ephesians 3:21). In the blessed hands of the Son of God we see all that God has committed to Him, all that is divine and eternal; but what He has wrought for the pleasure of His God and Father bears the same divine and eternal impress. The gold rings were set with the beryl, a precious stone that is used in Daniel 10:6 to bring before us the glory of the Lord. In the workmanship of the Son of God there is that which reflects the light of heaven that was revealed in Him, and which sets forth His own glory. It is indeed wonderful that the saints take character from Christ: "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:11).

"His belly — bright ivory overlaid with sapphires." The feelings of Christ, His compassions and affections, are indicated by "His belly," or "His body." How wondrously did the compassions of Christ shine out in this world! He had compassion on the multitudes, feeding them and healing their sick. His heart was moved by the cries of the blind, by the appeal of the leper, and by the sight of the sorrowing widow of Nain whose son had died. In the parable of the Good Samaritan He delighted to tell of His compassion for the helpless: and in the parable of the Prodigal of the compassion of the Father's heart. But the feelings of Christ for His own were different from His compassions for sinners: they were the love-gift of the Father to the Son. Of them, He said to the Father, "They were thine, and thou gavest them me." His love for them was expressed in His great care and watchfulness over them, and was particularly shown on the night when, "Having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end." It is a love that passes knowledge, and which has been measured in the infinite sufferings of the cross. In compassion He wept over Jerusalem, knowing all the sorrows that awaited the guilty city; but in sympathy, aroused by His deep love for the sorrowing sisters, He wept with Martha and Mary.

Ivory is durable and stable; and such are the compassions and affections of Christ. Not all the enmity and hatred of men could dry up the fountain of pity that welled up in the bowels of Christ. In the Garden of Gethsemane He healed the ear of the servant that Peter's sword had smitten; and on the cross He listened to the plea of the dying thief, saying to him, "Today shalt thou be with me

in paradise." His love remains the same on the risen side of death as when He gave Himself for His friends, and for His church upon the cross. Yes! "He loved them unto the end," and His love will not be satisfied until He presents the church "To Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." When the church is seen by John in vision, after the millennial reign of Christ, and entering into her eternal portion, she is "As a bride adorned for her husband." The love of Christ for His church is undimmed after the thousand years: His is indeed a stable and enduring love. The blue sapphire stones with which the bright ivory was overlaid surely reflect the heavenly character of Christ's love and compassions. What heavenly light is brought to us in the manifestation of the feelings of the heart of Christ! Do we not realise in contemplating the movements of the Son of God in this world, in all His ways of grace and love, that He was actuated with motives and sensibilities that were divine? His thoughts and desires were so unlike those of the men of this world; every spring of action within Him took character from heaven, as did every movement of His life. He did not live for Himself, even as He said, "I live on account of the Father." There was no other reason for His coming down from heaven.

"His legs — pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold."

Christ's steps through this world engage the hearts and minds of those who love Him, and are here likened unto pillars of marble. The apostle Peter seems to have been contemplating the pillars of marble when he wrote, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar, and it served as a witness between him and Laban. The writing upon the pillars of the temple, Jachin and Boaz, witnessed that "He will establish," and "In Him is strength." And do not the steps of the Son of God in this world, left in the record of God's word, tell us of God's ways in grace, and of the unflinching devotedness of Him who knew what it was to be weary with His journey, and who set His face as a flint to go to Jerusalem?

Marble is both strong and beautiful, as were the steps of the Lord Jesus in all His ways. From the 9th chapter of his Gospel, Luke views the Lord as journeying to Jerusalem, "When the time was come that He should be received up, He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Luke 9:51. And how strong was He, meeting all the opposition with a moral strength that was peculiarly His own; every step graced with rich beauty like the lines on marble. John Baptist saw something of the beauty of the pillars of marble when, "Looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God." The fine gold shone out from the steps of Jesus as He walked upon the water, for who but a Divine Person could cross the Lake in this fashion? In this world He was The Word become flesh, and the disciples saw the fine gold as they "Contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a Father." Thomas discerned the fine gold in the risen Christ when he said, "My Lord and my God." What a blessed occupation it is for us today to look upon the pillars of marble; to contemplate the moral strength that marked the way of Jesus here below, and to be engaged with the divine beauty of His every step, realising that we have been called to follow Him. While there is that in which we can follow Him, as having the divine nature, and as being indwelt by the Spirit of God: there is that which belongs peculiarly to Himself, set forth in the sockets of fine gold, that which we cannot imitate, but which we can admire. Although He walked as Man here below, He never ceased to be "The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father."

"His countenance as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars."

Having described her Lover in the precious details that she discerned in Him, and that had attracted her to Him, the bride then speaks of His bearing, His mien, the dignity of His aspect. She beholds Him as lofty Lebanon, standing in its incomparable grandeur and elevation above all the surrounding mountains, noble and supreme, the source of streams of living waters (Song of Solomon 4:15). And is not this how Christ appears to us as we behold Him passing through this world, and also in the place that God has given to Him at His right hand in heaven. See the nobility of His bearing when He "Entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when He had looked round about upon all things" (Mark 11:11), taking cognisance of all as the rightful heir. How supremely dignified does He appear when standing before the chief priests and the council, and before Pilate and Herod! — noble Lebanon towering above the mountains, the leaders of the world religiously and politically. The cedars are noted for their excellence, and especially the cedars of Lebanon; they are tall, upright and stately, and are the chief among the trees of the mountains, their timber being both firm and beautiful. Solomon "Spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall" (1 Kings 4:33). The cedar heads the list; it has precedence, and is pre-eminent in the realm in which it is found. Is it not so with Christ? Not only in Manhood here, but in His present place, He is supreme. When His excellencies and glories are brought out by the Spirit of God in Colossians 1:1-29, He is presented as "The Firstborn of all creation . . . Firstborn from among the dead, that He might have the first place in all things" (Colossians 1:14-18).

"His mouth is most sweet."

"Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth" were the first words of the bride, and the opening words of this song of songs. There she was contemplating the delight of the expression of His love for her. Here she is still occupied with Him who loves her, and with the sweetness of His love. Wine brings joy to the hearts of men, but is not to be compared to the joy of love. Men may love in word and in tongue, but divine love is expressed "In deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). How surpassing wonderful is the personal love of Christ for His own! Contemplating it individually, we can say with Paul, "The Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." As gathered together, even if a few of His own, we can say, "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour," and as forming part of the church, the bride for which Christ died, we can delight in this that "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." We need not, like the bride in our song, to long for the expression of His love, for He has expressed it fully and perfectly as a love "Which passeth knowledge." To be in the enjoyment of Christ's love we must be near Him, not content with the knowledge that He has expressed His love, but being in the deep sense of it in communion with Him; delighting in Him who has so loved us, and responding to His knowledge surpassing love.

"Yea, He is altogether lovely."

Having surveyed her Beloved from His head of the finest gold to His legs on sockets of fine gold, and having portrayed His glories and graces in charming detail, the enraptured bride exclaims, "Yea, He is altogether lovely." Natural beauty may be found in one in whom violence and corruption are most pronounced, even as we read, "But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty; from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him" (2 Samuel 14:25). There was not only the absence of blemishes in the

Beloved, He is altogether lovely. With regard to moral qualities, there is perhaps none to excel Daniel, in the Old Testament, yet in the presence of "A certain man . . . girdled with fine gold of Uphaz," he has to say, "My comeliness was turned in me into corruption" (Daniel 10:5-8). However comely a man may be, when brought into the presence of Him who is altogether lovely, his most excellent qualities are felt to be debased and impure.

"This is my beloved, and this is my friend."

It was with joy welling up in her bosom that the bride spoke of Him whom she loved, and at the close she declares the intimacy of her relationship with Him; He is her friend. When Peter was challenged by the Lord as to his love, three times he answered, "Thou knowest that I love thee." However solemn and great the failure of the saints, there is indeed love for Christ in their hearts; but this love did not originate with them. "We love Him, because He first loved us." He has made us His friends, and "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." We prove that we are His friends by obedience to His word. How blessed is this intimacy into which Christ has brought us, even as He said, "I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:13-15). The Son of God has brought us into wonderful nearness and relationship. We are His brethren as well as His friends, and through His death, He could say to Mary in resurrection, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Well then do we, like the bride of old, boast of Him who is our Beloved, and who has made us His friends.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Hidden in the House of God

Hidden in the House of God.

2 Chronicles 22:1-12; 2 Chronicles 23:1-21.

There are many beautiful pictures in the Old Testament which the Holy Spirit has left on record, that in them we might see the Lord Jesus Christ. On rising from the dead, the Lord Jesus spake to the two disciples going to Emmaus of His sufferings and glory, as it says, "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Later, "He said 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." To understand these prophecies, types, and shadows, we need divine understanding, but the Lord, in His rich grace affords this, even as of old, "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." Here then is one of such Scriptures, giving a beautiful type of the Lord Jesus Christ as taken from death, hidden in heaven from the eyes of men, and soon to be displayed in royal glory. The picture opens with the manifestation of the hatred, malice and power of the enemy. Athaliah, the daughter of Omri, and probably the daughter of the wicked Jezebel, had come by marriage into association with the royal line of David, and sought to usurp the throne by destroying the royal seed; but in God's providential care, and for the fulfilment of His purpose and promise, the young child is preserved and hidden in the house of God. Was it not on this wise that the Lord Jesus Christ, while still a babe, was protected from the ruthless sword of Herod, the usurper who sat upon the throne of David? What mattered it to Athaliah or Herod if many innocents were slain, so long as the seed royal was destroyed, and the glory of the kingdom was theirs. But a more powerful enemy was behind both the wicked Athaliah and corrupt Herod, who sought to set aside the will and counsel of God which centred in Christ, the true seed royal. And is it not wonderful that God does not intervene in His great power to protect the seed royal, but rather, in His wisdom, acts secretly for His preservation. The time for the display of His great power surely comes, but God can wait in patience, working in secret, while making known to His saints His counsels, in which are found divine wisdom and prudence (Ephesians 1:8). But the seed royal is taken from the place of death and is hid in the house of God. Does not this very simply and clearly typify what happened to the Lord Jesus Christ? The words are, "Jehoshabeath — took Joash and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain." When the Lord Jesus Christ was delivered from Herod, it was by night that Joseph departed to Egypt with the young child; and when the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead, it was not in a public display of power before the world. There was indeed the rending of the veil, the earthquake, the rending of the rocks, the opening of the graves, the arising of the bodies of many saints, the rolling away the stone, and the appearing of the angels; but so far as the Lord was concerned, He was not seen in resurrection by the world. And during the time the usurper reigns, the seed royal is safe, and hidden in the house of the Lord. What a great triumph God has secured in Christ! The enemy thought he was rid of God's Son, when he put him on the cross; but God raised Him from the dead, and set Him down in His presence, at His right hand, and has crowned Him with glory

and honour. He is in the place where Herod could not see Him, no nor all those who conspired against Him to put Him to death; He is in the Father's house, of which He said to the Jews, "Where I am ye cannot come."

There were however those favoured few who knew that the king's son was hidden in the house of God: even as the Lord said to the disciples, "The world seeth me no more; but ye see me." And in a little, others were brought into the secret, and the mighty men; and they in turn went throughout Judah, gathering the Levites and the chief of the fathers, and they came to God's earthly centre, Jerusalem. Do we not find in the Acts the disciples going everywhere with the testimony, that Christ Who was crucified, is risen and seated in heaven? Since those days, the word has come even to us; the testimony of a risen and glorified Christ at God's right hand in heaven. The result of that testimony concerning the king's son was, that those who were faithful to the Lord, gathered around the king at the divine centre. Has not the Gospel come to us that we might be in the enjoyment and power of the secret that Christ is risen from among the dead, and is hidden in the Father's house? We may well challenge our hearts as to how we have been affected by this blessed testimony. Alas! so many dear saints know that Jesus has died for their sins, and that He is risen from the dead; but how few seem to enter into the blessed realisation that God has given Him to be the object of our heart's affections, where He lives in heaven. We are partakers of a heavenly calling, and our minds are to be set on the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Has the testimony of the risen and glorified Christ attracted us to God's heavenly centre? Have we entered into the meaning of such a verse as "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus?" Our associations with the risen Christ are not in this world, but on the risen side of death: yea, in the heavenlies, where Christ is hidden from the eyes of men.

Jehoiada tells the congregation that the king is going to reign, and the people make a covenant with the king in the house of God. The priest is in the secret of God, and this secret is made known to those who fear God. If Christ is hidden at the present time, we certainly know that God will give Him the throne of His father David; indeed, all the kingdoms of the world shall be His. But the waiting time is to be occupied in the service of Him Who is hidden in the House of God. The faithful were divided into three companies; one-third, of priests and Levites, were to be keepers of the doors; another third were to be at the king's house; and the remaining third were to be at the gate of the foundation. How very favoured were those who thus served the king! And are we not very highly favoured in being called to the service of the Hidden One? We not only know the high and holy privilege of being associated with Him, where He is in the heavenlies but we know the joy of His presence, exceedingly real and precious, though spiritual, when we gather to His Name. Keeping the doors, in a priestly and Levitical way might suggest that nothing inconsistent with the presence and character of the king is to be allowed, when we surround Him. Only the priests and the Levites doing the service. were to be allowed into the house of the Lord. Although engaged in keeping the doors, the priests and Levites had also their proper service in the worship and service of the Lord. All evil was to be excluded: but we are not to be so occupied with the exclusion of evil as to forget the normal function of the priests and the Levites. So that, the first third functioned for the maintenance of what was due to God in His house, while the king was there. The second company were at the king's house. What a privilege to be where the king dwells! Does not this remind us of John 1:1-51, where the disciples asked Jesus, "Master, where dwellest thou?" These

came and saw where Jesus dwelt, and they dwelt with him. Blessed privilege! So too it is ours, to come into His presence, and know what it is to be in the joy of His company. Like the disciples in John 13:1-38, who had their feet washed, to have "part with me." Here is surely the thought of nearness to the king: the place of true favour, where he is known as he truly is. And nothing less than this will satisfy the heart that has been attracted to Christ: and this is what the blessed Son of God desires we should enjoy even now. O that we knew Christ better in His own home circle; where the lovely traits and the deep affections of the Hidden One are known! The type comes very short of the reality, for nothing can exceed the place of favour, the nearness, the closeness of the relationship, the joys, the affections, and the blessedness of all that God has given to us in association with the Son of His love. At the gate of the foundation, the last company had their station. If the enemy had been allowed into the foundations, what mischief he would have wrought. Has not this a voice for us in these days? Not only is there to be the exclusion of evil from the Lord's presence that the worship and service might go on unhindered, and the entering into the privileges, spiritual and heavenly, that God has marked us out for; but we are to be watchful of the foundations, so that nothing is allowed either doctrinally or morally that will weaken or assail what has been laid in the hearts of the saints, the truth of God. Is it not failure on this line that has brought in all the weakness and the ruin of the present day in the house of God? Yet no amount of failure relieves us of the solemn responsibility of keeping guard on the gate of the foundation.

All the people had their part in the court of the house of Jehovah; they were to keep the watch of Jehovah. If there are the special privileges, noticed in the three companies, there is that which belongs to us outside, that is in relation to what is not immediately connected with the presence of the Lord. We have our privileges inside and our privileges and responsibilities outside. What word can best tell of what should mark the saints of God in all their ways? Surely the word "Watch!" The Lord Himself enjoined the disciples to watch, in view of His returning. Paul warned the elders of Ephesus of the evil that was coining, and counseled them to watch. Thus also does he speak to the saints at Corinth, Colosse and Thessalonica; and the angel of the church of Sardis is exhorted to watch and is warned of the consequences of failure in watching. A life of watchfulness becomes us, for we are in the presence of foes, who not only seek our harm, but the dishonour of Him Who is hidden in the house of God. The king is soon to be manifested in His glory, and the knowledge of this, kept ever in the mind, would help us to maintain a spirit and attitude of watchfulness, in a scene where we are never out of danger.

There was however another special service to perform, and this belonged to the Levites. They were to encompass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand; and they were to be with the king at his coining in and going out. How varied were the services of the Levites. They served the priests in the house, they were porters in the house, they played the musical instruments and engaged in the service of song; now they carry the weapons of war as attached to the person of the king. And are we not called to put on the whole armour of God, as strong in the Lord and in the power of His might? Truly we are in conflict all the days that our Master is hidden in God's house! But the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual; and our foes are the devil and the great array of spiritual powers of darkness, for which we are no match in our own strength, but for which God has suitably armed us with His panoply. King David's spears and shields and targets, which were in the house of the Lord, were the weapons wielded by those who surrounded the king. So too, if we draw our weapons from the place where the Lord Jesus is, we

shall he suitably armed for the conflict to which He has called us.

It is very refreshing to note the obedience of the company which gathered around the king. This is the way to divine blessing, and what the Lord Jesus desired of His own. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." The devotion of that trusted band was verily shown in simple obedience to the commandments of Jehoiada. Look at what the Lord says in John 14:21-24, and John 15:10-14; John 15:17. How much depends on our simply obeying His commandments and word. What must it be to the heart of the Lord to have a company which values His word and seeks to obey it. His commendation of the church of Philadelphia is. "Thou hast kept my word. . . No doubt the Lord will have a faithful remnant in the coming day, just before He returns, in whose hearts He will work, and who, in obedience to His word, will prepare for His coming out from the house of God, from the Father's house, to take up His kingdom and throne, so that He might bring blessing to His poor earthly people, Israel. And so, in view of the king's coming out, each man has his right place in the house, facing the altar: surely the recognition that the king comes out in virtue of all wrought there. He, Who before entering into the presence of God, completed the great work of redemption. "Shall appear to those that look for Him the second time without sin for salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). Coming forth as the Anointed One, His garments fragrant with myrrh, aloes, and cassia (which speak of His personal graces), the crown of glory rests upon His brow, and the testimony of God is in His hand. When Christ has His rightful place, all God's thoughts for the blessing of Israel, and indeed of the world, will be given effect to by Christ. "Long live the king!" will have its true answer in that day, for the prophecy of Isaiah 9:1-21 will be fulfilled, "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever."

What a day of confusion will that be for the enemies of the king! The wicked Athaliah hears the people running and praising the king; and what a sight meets her gaze; the one whom she thought she had destroyed and dispossessed is exalted on his dais, acclaimed and praised by the princes and the people. But evil must be dealt with before peace and quiet can remain with God's people; the usurper must be brought low, and all associated with the evil one must bite the dust. Therefore was the wicked Athaliah slain, who had sought to set aside the counsel and promise of God in the destruction of the seed royal and the king's son, who had been hid in the house of God. So shall it be in the day of Christ's coming. The false king, the antichrist, will meet his doom, as prophetically recorded in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, "Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming."

Following the destruction of the evil one, Jehoiada makes a covenant between himself and all the people and the king, that they should be the people of Jehovah. When the Lord Jesus comes out He shall be both priest and king, the offices of Jehoiada and Joash are both His, even as Zechariah 6:1-15 shows, "He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and shall be a priest upon His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." A new covenant is going to be made with Israel when the king comes out, and one of its terms is "They shall be my people." All connected with idolatry will be for ever set aside and removed; Ephraim shall say, "What have I to do any more with idols." After all belonging to Baal was removed, Jehoiada sets everything in order for the worship of Jehovah, "According to the directions of David." So shall it be at the coming of Christ; God's original thoughts, set aside by man, will be expressed perfectly. The scene closes beautifully with the captains, nobles, governors, and all the

people setting the king "Upon the throne of His kingdom;" — Christ has His rightful place from all; "And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet; and they had slain Athaliah with the sword."

While we look with joyful expectation for the day when the Lord Jesus shall have His rights on earth, how blessed it is to know Him as the Risen One, hid in the Father's house; knowing too that we are associated with Him where He is gone.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Jehoiakim's Penknife

Jehoiakim's Penknife Jeremiah 36:1-32.

Josiah, the father of Jehoiakim, was one of the best kings that sat upon the throne of David. He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and at his death was greatly lamented by the prophet Jeremiah and by the people. Alas, Jehoiakim did not follow in the steps of his godly father, for "he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God." Had the king given attention to the word of God he would have understood that the divine judgment, decreed against Judah because of its idolatry, had been postponed in the long-suffering of God to give opportunity for repentance, and this because such as Hezekiah and Josiah had sought the Lord. The Rechabites, of whom we read in the previous chapter, were an example for Judah. They refused the wine offered by the prophet Jeremiah because their father Jonadab had commanded them not to drink wine; but Israel and Judah had fallen into idolatry in defiance of the express commandment of Jehovah their God. On the instruction of Jehovah, His servant Jeremiah wrote down in a book the judgments pronounced by God against Israel, Judah and the nations with the desire that "the house of Judah will hear all the evil I purpose to do unto them: and they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin" (Jeremiah 36:3). Jehoiakim had already reigned four years, and been given time to turn to God, but iniquity had increased, and further warning was being given in the hope that the king and his people would repent of their sins and return to Jehovah their God.

God's prophet Jeremiah was in prison when the word of the Lord came to him, manifesting what was the attitude of the king and his subjects towards the Master whom the prophet served. Unable to read the words that the Lord had given to him, Jeremiah instructed Baruch to go to the house of the Lord and read them to the people, in the hope that they would supplicate before the Lord and "return every one from his evil way."

It was upon a "fasting day" that God's word to Judah was read to the people "at the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house." Outwardly, there was fasting, but the fast did not express the true state of heart of the king or the nation. They were like the disciples of the Pharisees of a later date, who often fasted (Luke 5:33), but who had no heart for the Son of God who was present in their midst. Mere outward religious observances are of no value in the sight of God; He desires reality, a heart that is true before Him, and a life that gives Him pleasure.

Among those who heard the word of God read there was one who seemed to be deeply affected by it, Michaiah son of Gemariah, one of the princes, and he went down to the king's house and reported what he had heard to the assembled princes. Six of the princes are named, for the Lord knew every one that was there, and each will have to give account to God regarding his attitude to His word. That the princes were aroused by the tidings is evident, for they at once sent Jehudi to bring Baruch and the book that contained the words of God.

Fear laid hold upon all the princes when the words of divine judgment were read to them, and they said to Baruch, "We will surely tell the king of all these words." Having enquired of Baruch how he came to possess the book, they said to him, "Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be." It seems clear that the princes knew what the attitude of their master would be when he heard the word of God read. They felt that their king would not be well disposed to those who brought to him the word of God which pronounced judgment upon him and his people. At this stage the princes, influenced by some among them, desired the protection of those who, in faithfulness to God and His people, were not afraid to read His word.

True to their word, the princes made known the matter to the king, who desired that the word of God should be brought to him. It almost seemed that the princes had some foreboding as to what would happen to the Book, for they did not take it to the king when they informed him of its contents, but "laid it up in their chamber of Elishama the scribe."

Jehudi, who brought the Book, read it in the ears of the king and his assembled princes, while the king sat in his winter-house with the fire burning before him. Without waiting for the whole of the divine message to be read, after the reading of "three or four leaves," the profane king, instead of being afraid, as his princes had been, cut the roll "with the penknife, and cast it into the fire . . . until all the roll was consumed." Like many another since his day, this foolish man imagined that he could get rid of God's word by consigning it to the flames.

Neither king Jehoiakim, nor any who, like him, have cut up the Scriptures or have burned them, have had any true knowledge of the God who gave them by inspiration or that the word of God is a living word that cannot be destroyed, in this case, the Lord told His servant Jeremiah to "Take again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned." In addition, there was a special word for the king, telling him of the divine judgment that was about to fall upon his person, upon his seed, and upon his land. The king of Babylon would certainly come, and execute the judgment that had been written in the roll. God had given him the opportunity to repent, but he had not only refused it, but had profanely despised the mercy of the God of Israel. The professing church, like the nation of Israel in the days of Jehoiakim, has been marked by idolatry, corruption, and persecution of the servants of the Lord. There was the time when leaders of the professing church burned the Scriptures, for in them there was the condemnation of their idolatry and corruption; but not all their burnings of the Scriptures or persecution of the saints and servants of the Lord could stop the spread of God's word or hinder the work of the Lord.

Since the establishment of Protestantism much of the idolatry, corruption and persecution has gone, but it still remains in measure, especially where the truth of the Scriptures is not known. The burning of the Scriptures has virtually ceased, for the corrupt church no longer fears the exposure of its searching light, and this because Protestantism is no longer guided by the word of God. If the burning of the Scriptures has almost ceased, the cutting of the Scriptures has not: and the solemn thing is that the cutting is being done by those who once protested against the burnings.

Modernism, like Jehoiakim, does not like the word of God. The king of Israel did not want to hear of the judgment of God that was about to come upon him and his nation because of their sins. Nor do the modern thinkers of the professing church like to hear of the judgment of God that is about to come upon the false church. There are many things in the Scriptures they do not like, and they

have been endeavouring to get rid of them by cutting them out of the Bible. What passes for criticism is but the mind of man intruding itself into the holy things of God, and daring to reject as God's word what He has given for the instruction and blessing of His people. As surely as the divine judgment fell upon the king Jehoiakim and the idolatrous nation he reigned over, so shall the judgment of God fall upon the church that bears the name of Christ, but which is a false church, caring only for its own things, and refusing the light of God's word, and despising the solemn warnings He has given. When the princes first heard the word of God read to them, pronouncing the judgments that were to come, they were all afraid; but when their profane king cut up the Scripture and consigned it to the fire, "they were not afraid, nor rent their garments." Men soon get accustomed to hearing of judgment, and become indifferent to the warnings that God gives them.

Here it is clearly indicated what the proper attitude should have been when the king cut and burned the roll containing what God had spoken to Jeremiah. The princes should have been afraid, and should have rent their garments. They ought to have been shocked and distressed at the wickedness of their king, but, for the most, they were indifferent, their monarch's profanity taking away the fear that first gripped them on hearing the words of judgment that God had sent through His servant.

Yet there were three princes, whose names remain in the divine record, who were bold enough to intercede with the king, seeking to deter him from his wicked act. They knew the king was doing wrong, but they had not the depth of conviction the situation demanded, for truly godly men would have rent their garments, knowing the awfulness of man attempting to challenge the Almighty God of Israel by cutting up and burning His word. Not content with burning the roll, the wicked king sought to lay his hand upon the servants of the Lord. Sometimes the Lord has allowed men to do their worst, killing His servants, as He allowed them to kill His Son: but when He willed it, when it suited His inscrutable purpose. He hindered them in their evil designs. So it was here; the servants of the Lord, who, on the counsel of the princes, had hidden themselves, are not to be found, for "The Lord hid them."

Safe in the place where the Lord had hidden them, Jeremiah and Baruch produce again a roll with all the words that had been written on the roll that had been destroyed by the king. Moreover, "there were added besides unto them many like words." Little did the foolish king realise that many centuries after the judgment of God that Jeremiah had pronounced had been carried out to the letter, the very words written by Jeremiah would be read by millions down the ages; and his own wicked and foolish act would also be written down and read, for the instruction of the people of God, and to warn those who, like him, would be profane enough to interfere with the written word of God.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Keys

Keys The use of a key is known to all. One possessing the key of a city, gate or door controls whatever is within and is responsible for its safety and its use. In Scripture the use of the term key is largely symbolic, though it is used in its literal sense in Judges 3:25, where the servants of Eglon king of Moab use one to open the door that Ehud had shut after he had slain their lord. A key is used to shut or open, and the Lord Jesus is presented to us in Scripture as having different keys, some of which He uses Himself, and others which He has committed to servants to be used for Him. **The Key of the House of David** In Isaiah 21:1-17 we learn that Shebna, who was of the lineage of David, was over the house of Hezekiah, but, because Jehovah was displeased with him, his office was to be given to another, even to Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah. Regarding Eliakim the Lord said, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open" (Isaiah 22:22). With the key of David upon his shoulder, the government of the royal house was committed into the hand of Eliakim, and he was to minister in his high position, as called of God, for the good of "the inhabitants of Jerusalem and . . . the house of Judah".

Eliakim in this is surely a type of the Lord Jesus Christ who, in the coming day, will order all in Jerusalem, in Judah, yea, in all Israel for the glory of God and the blessing of His people. This gives us in type what is proclaimed in the prophecy of Isaiah 9:6-7, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder . . . upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever".

Although the Lord will rule over all as Son of Man in the day of His glory, Eliakim typifies only that part of the Lord's rule connected with Israel. All the glory of Israel will hang upon Him, the Nail in the sure place, the One who was "removed, and . . . cut down" but who, in resurrection, fulfils all that has been foreshadowed and prophesied concerning Him in the Old Testament Scriptures. **The Key of David**

Though no doubt alluding to this Scripture, the passage in Revelation 3:7 has something different in view. In Isaiah 21:1-17 it is the future government of the Lord Jesus that is referred to, whereas in Revelation 3:1-22 it is the present government of the Lord in the midst of the assemblies. He is not yet ruling over the house of David: this awaits His coming to earth again, but His present place of authority over God's kingdom is exercised among those who profess allegiance to Him. The Lord will soon come out of heaven to rule publicly over the kingdoms of the world, but He has all power given to Him now in heaven and on earth, walking in the midst of the assemblies, and acting behind the scenes in regard to this world, His government in control, not allowing the forces of evil to overstep the appointed limits.

How encouraging it is for the saints to realise that all power and authority are in the hands of their Lord and Master, and that men are limited in the evil they can do. To the Philadelphian assembly the Lord said, "Behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it" (Revelation

3:8). Whether it be a door into the exhaustless and unsearchable riches of the heavenly Christ, or a door of testimony to proclaim all that Christ has made known to us, no man can shut the door He has opened. The saints may have but "a little strength", but it is not their strength that opens the door, or that keeps it open; it is the strength of Him who has the key of David. The Key of Knowledge The doctors of the law in Israel had a special place of privilege as being instructed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, but this privilege had its commensurate responsibility. They were responsible to the Lord for the instruction of His earthly people, and those to whom the Lord spoke in Luke 11:1-54 had been unfaithful to God, not having given to the people the knowledge of God contained in His word. The Lord therefore said to them, "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered" (Luke 11:52).

According to the many promises of the Old Testament, the Lord Jesus had come to His people Israel, and the doctors of the law ought to have welcomed Him at His coming, for they knew the Scriptures that spoke of Him, as they had the key of knowledge. Instead of gladly receiving God's Christ and becoming His followers, they joined with all who opposed Him, and spoke against Him, hindering the poor of the flock who sought His company and blessing, and meriting the exposure and condemnation of the Lord in the words of Luke 11:46-52.

How highly favoured are the saints of God of this day, having the key of knowledge in Christ that opens out to them all the great treasures of the Old Testament and the New. It is in the Son of God that God has been revealed, and it is in the mystery of God that centres in the Son of God that there are hid "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). Knowing Christ, we are able to range over the Scriptures, as guided by the Holy Spirit, to see in them the things concerning Him (Luke 24:44-45; 1 Corinthians 2:12). The Keys of the Kingdom

After Simon Peter had received the wonderful revelation from the Father concerning the Person of the Son, and had received from the Son of God the revelation concerning the building of His assembly, the Lord said to him, "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 shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:16-19). As has been often pointed out, the keys that the Lord gave to Peter were not the keys of heaven, but of the kingdom of heaven; and Peter was to use these keys on earth, not in heaven.

Peter used the keys given to him by the Lord to let the Jews into the kingdom of heaven when he preached to them on the day of Pentecost, three thousand being converted and baptised. Simon Peter was the divine instrument to bring these converted souls under the sway of the Lord who had gone to heaven, and who ruled His kingdom from His heavenly seat. The keys of the kingdom of heaven were again used by Simon Peter to bring the Gentiles into the Christian circle when he was sent by God to make known to Cornelius, and those gathered with him, the way of salvation (Acts 10:1-48). With the keys there was also given to Peter the authority of binding and loosing on earth in the Name of the Lord, and in Acts 5:1-42 he binds upon Ananias and Sapphira their sin against the Holy Spirit, and this was ratified in heaven by the immediate judgment of God upon them. What was initially given to Peter in Matthew 16:1-28 by the Lord is also given by Him to the assembly, yea to two or three gathered to His name (Matthew 18:18-20). Governmental binding and loosing of sins is shown in the case of the man who sinned at Corinth, who had his sin bound

upon him according to the instructions given in 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, and who was to have his sin loosed, according to the instructions of 2 Corinthians 2:6-11. The Keys of Hell and of Death

How different was the appearance of Jesus when the Apostle John saw Him in His official glory in Revelation 1:1-20 John had known Jesus on earth in blessed intimacy, knowing the rest and joy of reclining in His bosom, but now he sees Him with "His eyes as a flame of fire . . . and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (Revelation 1:13-16). Was it any wonder that he "fell at His feet as dead"? Once before John had been "sore afraid" in the presence of the Lord in His glory (Matthew 17:6), but then there was no sword in His mouth, and nothing of the judicial character now seen in Revelation 1:1-20.

It is the same voice that had said on the glory mount, "Be not afraid" that now says to His servant. "Fear not"; and it is the same hand that is laid upon him to still his fear that once was used to wash his feet. Having presented Himself to John as "the First and the Last", Jesus said, "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Revelation 1:17-18). On earth the Lord had said, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do" (Luke 12:4). Men may take the lives of others, or even take their own lives, but only One has the keys of hell and of death; only One can both kill and cast into hell; and He only can bring out of death those who have entered there. Man has not the right to kill, not having been given this authority, saving as under divine instructions in the government of God given to Noah in Genesis 9:6, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man".

Risen from the dead, the Man Christ Jesus, the Son of Man, has the authority over death and hell; and how wonderful it is that just before He entered into death's domain to break its power, He said to the repentant thief who was about to follow Him into death, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). The One to whom the Father had given authority to execute judgment, and whose voice would bring out all in resurrection, and who, in resurrection would speak of His having the keys of hell and of death, in wondrous grace told the dying thief that He would open the door for him into the paradise of God. The Keys of the Bottomless Pit The bottomless pit is evidently the place from which come the darkening spiritual influences that affect men in this world, which bring delusion and sorrow upon those who are affected by the diabolical teachings of those who are the agents of Satan. It is evident from Revelation 9:1 that Satan has not control in an absolute way to do his will, for the key of the bottomless pit is not in his hand. The star that fell from heaven was given the key for the time being, but the key did not belong to him. For a limited time this star, some great intellectual or spiritual dignitary, was allowed to bring up from the infernal regions influences that would bring delusion and trouble upon those who had not the seal of God in their foreheads. When we come to Revelation 20:1 we see the key of the bottomless pit in the hand of the angel who binds Satan with a great chain and casts him into the bottomless pit, shutting him up and sealing his prison house. How good it is to see that the control of evil is not in the hand of Satan, the originator of sin. God, in His wisdom, has allowed evil to rear its ugly head in His fair universe, and to invade the world, but it never has been beyond God's control. There is One in heaven by whom "all things consist" (Colossians 1:17), who holds all things together to secure His will and for the good of His saints, and who only allows evil to reach to the limits that He has appointed, saying to Satan and to all the evil forces that abound, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed".

Wm. C. Reid.

S. King Josiah

King Josiah

Israel had been in captivity for eighty years when Josiah ascended the throne of Judah, and the judgment of God had already been pronounced on Judah because of the sins of Manasseh his grandfather (2 Kings 21:10-16). In spite of all the evil, God was pleased to raise up His servant king Josiah, giving a little respite before the execution of the judgment that had been pronounced, and giving His people time for repentance and to turn from all their sins to Himself. Just as we have the assembly of Philadelphia in Revelation 3:1-22 before Laodicea, which is to be spued out of the mouth of Christ, so have we the pious Josiah before judgment comes upon the nation of Israel, upon the kings, the priests, the prophets and the people.

Josiah's Early Days

After Manasseh's captivity in Babylon because of the enormity of his sins, he prayed to the Lord and "He was intreated of him," and on returning to the land he showed the fruits meet for repentance, taking away the strange gods, and the idolatrous altars, and repairing and sacrificing to God on His altar. He also commanded his people to serve the Lord the God of Israel (2 Chronicles 33:11-16). All this had no effect on Amon his son, the father of Josiah, but it may have influenced the young child who came to the throne about two years after Manasseh's death, for from the beginning of his reign, at eight years old, he took the right road, doing what "was right in the sight of the Lord," and walking "in the ways of David his father," and declining "neither to the right hand, nor the left" (2 Chronicles 34:1-2). At sixteen years of age, "in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father" (2 Chronicles 34:3). How delightful this must have been to the God of Israel, especially after the dreadful wickedness of king Ahaz and of Manasseh and Amon. There had been a break in the line of wickedness during the reign of Hezekiah, but it is sorrowful to record that it was during the fifteen years of extra life that Hezekiah had received that the wicked Ahaz had been born. Josiah found, as everyone else has found, that those who seek after God do not seek in vain; and how good it is when one seeks the Lord while still young. When he reached the age of twenty, Josiah became very active in his zeal for the God of Israel. Starting at his very doors, "he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem" from all connected with idolatry, then continued this cleansing work "in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali . . . and cut down all the idols throughout the land of Israel" (2 Chronicles 34:3-7). With divinely given wisdom the young king realised that every trace of idolatry must be removed not from his own kingdom only, but from the whole inheritance of God which had been defiled by the kings of Israel.

Repairing the House of God The purging of the land and of the house had taken some years, and in "the eighteenth year of his reign," at the age of twenty-six, the zeal of good king Josiah for Jehovah was unabated. Hitherto the work had been of destruction of idols, and cleansing from all connected with idolatry, but now he had time to repair the damage that had been caused to the house of God. It was not sufficient to destroy what was false, there must be the re-establishment

of the worship of Jehovah, and for this His house must be restored. What pleasure there must have been for the Lord to see this son of David's zeal for His house, a faint anticipation of Him who could say, "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up." In this great work of recovery the king had with him the governor of the city and the recorder, and they in turn brought the people in, for "Manasseh and Ephraim, and all the remnant of Israel" joined with "all Judah and Benjamin" in providing the means for the repairing of God's house. How good it is in this day, as in that day, when all the people of God are interested in the house of God, and have the privilege of contributing to it. Few have the great devotion that marked the poor widow of Mark 12:41-44, who gave her all for the support of God's house, but we can all help to maintain God's testimony in His house in some small way.

There were many who did the actual work, and some had the oversight, and they were marked by "faithfully" working in what was given them to do. Levites, scribes, officers and porters all had their part to play, the overseers being named, and there being mention too of those "that could skill of instruments of musick" (Mark 12:10-13). If there was faithfulness, there was also happiness in the work of the Lord, the musicians bringing out the praises of those who were engaged in this blessed service for the God of Israel.

Finding the Book of the Law

While engaged in the repairing of the house of God, "Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses . . . and Shaphan carried the book to the king . . . and Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes" (2 Chronicles 34:14-19). Well might Josiah rend his clothes on reading of what lay in store for Israel on forsaking their God and turning to idols. Yet how great the contrast between the attitude of Josiah and that of his son Jehoiakim who, when he heard the words written in Jeremiah's roll, cut it with his penknife and cast it into the fire (Jeremiah 36:23).

Josiah, knowing that the Lord was his only resource with His judgment before him, sent chosen servants saying, "enquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book" (2 Chronicles 34:21). Simple faith in God and in His word, and the desire to do the will of God, gave the faithful king the intelligence to discern the mind of God disclosed in His word and to understand what should be done in that solemn hour. The messengers of the king knew who had the mind of God, and they went to Huldah the prophetess, who said to them, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel" (2 Chronicles 34:23) How good it was that the Lord had His servant who could speak His word to the devout king, just as He had His interpreter ready for the Ethiopian eunuch who desired to know of whom the prophet Isaiah was speaking (Acts 8:27-35). With the word of God completed, and having the Spirit of God with us and in us, we can at all times come to Him to know His mind and will for every occasion and circumstance of life.

Through Huldah the king learned that there was no turning back of the divine judgment, but that God had taken account of his tender heart, of his repentance and his weeping, and that the judgment would not take place in his day. God, in His mercy, delayed the judgment on account of the fidelity of good king Josiah. Hezekiah also delayed the coming judgment when he "humbled himself for the pride of his heart" (2 Chronicles 32:26). Yet the answer from the heart of Hezekiah

cannot be compared with that of Josiah, for Hezekiah seemed to be more concerned with himself when he said concerning the judgment that his folly would bring upon his house, "Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken . . . if peace and truth be in my days" (2 Kings 20:19).

Josiah's Covenant When Josiah heard the word of the Lord through Huldah, "the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem . . . and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests and the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 34:29-30). All who were available heard that day the word of God from the lips of their king.

It was with the very best of motives that the good king brought the people into a covenant with God that day, for he could not know as we now know the impossibility of man after the flesh "to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book" (2 Chronicles 34:31). Yet in spite of not understanding the weakness of their flesh, it could be written, "all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers" (2 Chronicles 34:33). God took account of the desires of the king's heart, and of those of a people who followed him.

Fulfilment of God's Word Concerning Bethel

More than three hundred years before Josiah was born, while king Jeroboam was standing to burn incense before his idolatrous altar at Bethel, a man of God from Judah "cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee" (1 Kings 13:1-2). This prophecy was literally fulfilled, as is seen in 2 Kings 23:15-18. God can name His servants long years before they are born, as in the case of Josiah, or as seen in Cyrus, whom God used for the help of His people after the captivity (Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1). And this is the God who has chosen us in Christ "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4).

Josiah's Passover

Good king Josiah's work of cleansing had revealed the awful catalogue of evil that existed in the land. He had removed the idolatrous altars of Ahaz, Manasseh and Jeroboam, which had defiled and corrupted the worship of the true God. God's house had to be cleansed and repaired, and the high places, that Solomon had built for the idols of his foreign wives, Josiah defiled. There had even been worship of the sun at the entrance of the temple, and all connected with this the king removed (2 Kings 23:4-14).

Having accomplished this great work of cleansing, "the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the Lord your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant" (2 Kings 23:21). The priests, the Levites, the singers and the people all had their part in this remarkable celebration, so that it could be written, "And there was no passover like that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (2 Chronicles 35:18).

What was written "in the book of Moses" (2 Chronicles 35:12), and what David had commanded concerning the singers (2 Chronicles 35:15), regulated the proceedings on that great day. God's word had laid hold on the heart and mind of the king, and this caused him to set aside all that was not in accordance with it, and he did not allow anything of his own thoughts, or of the thoughts of others, to intrude into that which God had commanded for His worship, even if it were in days of great weakness, and just before the final stroke of divine judgment was about to fall.

Well has it been recorded in the Scriptures concerning this faithful king, "And like him there was no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him" (2 Kings 23:25). What a wonderful commendation! In spite of all the evil with which he had been surrounded, the heart of the king had been set upon God, and God had given him the wisdom, the strength and the grace to do that which was pleasing in His sight. The Death of Josiah

After such a faithful reign, with so much for the glory of the Lord and the good of His people, how very sad is the end of such a reign. Josiah, like his forefather Amaziah in 2 Kings 14:8-14, meddled with strife that he ought to have kept away from, and it brought about his death. Josiah should not have meddled with the conflicts of the king of Egypt, and especially when he had been warned by the king of Egypt to forbear from meddling with God, "that He destroy thee not" (2 Chronicles 35:21). This was the only dark blot on the bright history of good king Josiah, and surely the Lord has given it as a warning to His people not to meddle with strife to which He has not called them. Had Josiah sought the mind of God in this matter, he would have been spared, but had he finished his course without a blot on his record, he would have been the only one to have done so, save the true Son of David, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is perfect. How much there is for us to admire and to learn from the reign of good king Josiah but it is to Him who alone is perfect that we look as an Object for the heart and mind, the One who fulfilled all God's will on earth, and is even now carrying out the will of God from the place of glory and honour that He fills at God's right hand in heaven.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Looking unto Jesus

"Looking unto Jesus" The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who had been reared in Judaism, and who had the temple at Jerusalem as the centre of their worship. Jerusalem had been established as the divine centre in the days of David and Solomon, and when the Lord was upon earth He had owned the temple as His house, but when He was rejected God's centre was no longer on earth, it was in Jesus in heaven. Every divine blessing, whether for Jew or Gentile, is in Christ in heaven; and though the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews presents the truth as contrasting what God had established in Christ with the shadows of the tabernacle system, all that is presented in Christ is for the believing Gentile as for the believing Jew. In Hebrews 12:1-29 the writer refers to the great cloud of witnesses of Hebrews 11:1-40 who had shown what faith could accomplish. Like them, we are to be marked by faith, and are to run with patience the race set before us, laying aside everything that would hinder, and especially the besetting sin of Israel, unbelief, that had all along been the cause of their not entering into the blessing of God.

These outstanding men and women of faith showed some of the manifold features of faith, but every feature in its perfection is to be found in Jesus. He is the author and finisher of faith, the One who in His pathway has manifested every detail of it. So that if we desire to learn what the path of faith is we have to see it in Jesus. Throughout His perfect pathway He had the end in view, and this sustained Him through all His manifold trials. His path was beset with deepest sorrows, but He looked forward to the joy that He would have at God's right hand when all the sorrow and sufferings were over.

Jesus was called upon to pass through sufferings that were peculiarly His own, for none but Himself could know what the cross meant. No one could enter into what the Lord sustained when He endured the cross, when the full load of our sins lay upon Him, when He was made sin for us, and when He bore the penalty that our sins had merited, and the stroke of divine judgment fell upon His guiltless head. No human heart and mind can touch the awful feelings of the heart of Jesus when He was the holy sin bearer, and when He cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

We know it was the love of Jesus for His God and Father, and for us, that sustained Him amidst the sufferings and judgment of the cross, but here we learn that the joy that lay ahead in the Father's presence also sustained Him, even as it is written prophetically, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalms 16:11).

Jesus Our Object

It is indeed blessed for the Christian to look steadfastly on Jesus at the right hand of God, an object on which the eye can rest with perfect delight, and on which the heart can feed with deep satisfaction and joy. The place that Jesus occupies at God's right hand is His alone, none can

share it, but the saint of God can find constant pleasure in gazing upon Him there. This is where Stephen saw Jesus, and he bore witness to Him there, saying, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). Stephen saw the Lord in a special way, as did also Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus, but the Christian today can say with the writer of this epistle, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour" (Hebrews 2:9).

We see Jesus in His glory as Son of Man, we see Him as our Great High Priest, as our Advocate, as our Head, and in the many glories described in Hebrews 11:1-14, and as viewed in Colossians 1:1-29, and in many other rays of glory portrayed for us by the Holy Spirit in the writings of the Old and New Testaments. Viewing Jesus in His glory will have a very marked influence upon our lives down here, we shall "grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).

Jesus Our Example

Jesus is also the great Exemplar for His people, and we are to "consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself" lest we get wearied and faint in our minds. How wonderful it is that we can consider Jesus in His pathway through this world, and how amazing that He should suffer the reproaches of sinful men. Pharisees, Sadducees. Herodians, chief priests and the elders of Israel were among those who stood against Jesus, but He suffered it all patiently, manifesting divine goodness where all around was evil, and telling out the love of God when the hatred of men was shown in all its bitterness against Him. In the conflict of good against evil Jesus resisted unto blood, dying a martyr's death. None could be with Him in the death of the cross, when He made atonement, but others have followed Him in the conflict of good and evil, and have resisted unto blood. The Hebrews, to whom the epistle was written, had suffered much, having taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, but they had not yet been called upon to die for their faith in Jesus. Stephen had died, and James the brother of John had died, as martyrs, but those who received this epistle were still in the body, and they are encouraged to look unto Jesus as the example for them in their path of faith.

Jesus a Merciful and Faithful High Priest

Israel's high priest had "holy garments . . . for glory and beauty," and a holy, golden crown upon his mitre; but our High Priest has been "crowned with glory and honour" at God's right hand in heaven. In heaven Jesus is a merciful and faithful High Priest for His saints, having passed through this world, and knowing all that His own have to endure in the way of testing. Manhood in its perfection was His, with all the feelings, desires and circumstances that belong to man; and because of this He can fully enter into all that we are called upon to pass through (Hebrews 2:17-18).

Jesus has taken away all dread from us in regard to our sins, for, on the cross, He made propitiation for them. Nor need we have a fear in relation to the circumstances of the desert way, for Jesus is able to succour us in every trial. The names of the children of Israel were on the shoulder stones of the high priest, and our names are indelibly engraved on the shoulders of our High Priest in heaven. The One who was strong enough to enter into death and come out in triumph, is able to carry us safely through every trial. To lay hold of the resources that are

available for us, we must ever be looking unto Jesus in heaven. When Peter kept his eye on Jesus he walked on the waves, but with his eye on the storm he began to sink. We, too, shall be superior to every storm if the eye is on Jesus.

Jesus a Great High Priest Of old, Israel's high priest, on the way into the holiest on the day of atonement, passed through the court and through the holy place. Our High Priest is a Great High Priest, who has passed through the heavens on His way to the right hand of God. Yet, though so great, He has a heart that feels with His people in all their sorrows, and difficulties (Hebrews 4:14-15). The greatness of Jesus is seen in Hebrews 1:1-14, for He is Son of God, the creator of the worlds, the One who made the earth and the heavens (Hebrews 1:2; Hebrews 1:10); and His greatness is also seen in His work of propitiation, and in the place He fills at God's right hand.

Jesus feels with us as having known all that tries His people. He knew what it was to hunger and thirst, and to be weary with His journey. He knew what it was to shed tears, being rejected by Israel, and sorrowing with His own in the presence of death. Yea, He knew strong crying and tears as none ever knew or could know, both because of the perfection of His humanity, His holy sinless nature, and because of what lay before Him in the cross. All this enables Jesus to feel with His own, for our names are on His breast. The throne of God, which by reason of man's sin became for him a throne of judgment, has by the work of Jesus in redemption become a throne of grace. As we look upon Jesus on the throne above, we can come boldly into His presence, and there "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). The grace and mercy are not to help us in failure, but to keep us from failure.

Jesus Our Forerunner At the close of Hebrews 6:1-20 Jesus is seen within the veil of heaven, and His presence there has given hope to His people. Because of the intercession of Jesus on the cross the nation of Israel was treated by God as a manslayer (Luke 23:34; Acts 3:17); God viewing the slaying of Christ as a sin of ignorance; but when the testimony of the Spirit of God was rejected, the nation was no longer in ignorance, but wilful in its guilt, so that Stephen says, "ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" of the "Just One." There was no further hope for the nation, which went on head-long to divine judgment. But there was still hope for the repentant individual. Israel had lost their earthly Messiah, and the only hope for any in Israel was to flee to Christ in heaven. The city of refuge was no longer on earth, it was in heaven; and those who were guilty regarding the death of Christ may find refuge and salvation in Christ in heaven.

Those who find refuge from divine judgment in Christ have also a hope that is sure and stedfast in Jesus within the heavenly veil, for Jesus has entered into heaven as the forerunner of all who trust in Him. The Jew had always looked for blessing on earth, but the Christian, whether Jew or Gentile by nature, must look to heaven. All our blessings are heavenly and spiritual, and all are in Jesus in the presence of God, and soon we shall have all that God has given us with Jesus in heaven. Our hope is in heaven, whither Jesus soon will bring us to be with Himself there.

Jesus the Coming One

Once in the end of the age Jesus appeared in this world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and now He appears in the presence of God for us, our Great High Priest (Hebrews 9:24-26). The questions raised by our sins have been for ever answered by Him who "was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9:28), and very soon He will again appear, not to deal with sin, for

every question as to sin was settled on the cross, but to bring salvation to His people.

It is to those who look for Him that He will appear. The remnant of Israel will look for Him, and He will save them from their enemies; but the saints of the present day are also looking for the coming of Jesus. First, Jesus will come and take the church to heaven, and no doubt also all the Old Testament saints as well — all the saints who have been redeemed by His precious blood — the dead being raised, the living changed (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:52); and then He will appear in glory, His saints being with Him (2 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 John 3:2).

How blessed then is our present portion in "Looking unto Jesus." We look stedfastly on Him to see the path of faith, to see Him as our heavenly Object, our Example, our Great High Priest who succours and sympathises with us on the way to heaven, where we see Him as our Forerunner within the veil, and where we look for Him as the coming One to take us to be for ever with Himself in the Father's House, and to share the glory of the kingdom at His appearing.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Man's City and Its Judgment

Man's City and Its Judgment The great cities of the world are centres for the display of human achievement of past and present ages, and men find much of their pleasure in viewing the productions of human skill, in studying the thoughts of man's heart and mind, and in listening to his music. Religious shrines, museums and art galleries portray the works of the architect and the craftsman; universities, colleges and libraries preserve the learning and philosophy of the world's thinkers, sages and teachers; while cathedrals and music halls resound with the productions of the great composers.

Cain's City From Genesis 4:16-17 we learn of the origin of man's cities, for in the divine record we read, "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord . . . and he builded a city." Cursed from the earth because of his sin, Cain was a fugitive and a vagabond. There was no thought in his heart of repentance on account of the murder of his brother; there was no desire for reconciliation to God; he sought to forget God, and hush the stirrings of a guilty conscience, in a place of his own devising and construction, where he could find his pleasure with those derived from him, away from God.

Lamech, a descendant of Cain, became a polygamist, and confessed that he had "slain a man," exposing the self-gratification and violence that characterised the dwellings of Cain. Jabal, the son of Lamech, "was the father of such as dwell in tents, and . . . have cattle." This was not evidence of a pilgrim path, but rather that men were settling down to a life of prosperity without God. Jubal, the brother of Jabal, "was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ"; and no doubt his sweet music charmed those who heard it, and helped to quieten the voice of the accusing conscience in the city of violence and corruption. Another son of Lamech was Tubal-cain, "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron," whose skilful works of art and scientific invention would doubtless fill his fellows with admiration and gain for him their applause.

Although there was so much in Cain's city for man's pride and pleasure, there was nothing to gratify the heart of God, for when God looked down, He saw that the earth was corrupt, and filled with violence, "and it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart" (Genesis 6:5; Genesis 6:11). Man's prosperity, music, art and science had not in the least degree improved his state of moral depravity. So great was the evil in God's sight that He swept the earth with a deluge, removing man and all his works from the face of the earth, only sparing Noah and his sons, and their wives, for "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord," being "a just man and perfect in his generations."

Nimrod's City

After the flood, when men multiplied on the earth, Nimrod "began to be a mighty one on the earth," and "the beginning of his kingdom was Babel" (Genesis 10:8; Genesis 10:10). Nimrod had other cities besides Babel, but it is specially to Babel and its building that the Spirit of God calls attention in Genesis 11:1-32. Taking counsel together, men said, "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower,

whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

Men were united in their desires, and in their endeavours, but it was not to seek the glory of God or to give Him pleasure; He was not in all their thoughts. Their own security, advancement and pride of achievement completely filled their minds and hearts, from which God was excluded. Men have learned much since that day. They know that they can never reach to heaven with a tower of bricks, but they are still occupied with securing peace without God, in advancing their own interests, and priding themselves on their achievements. Instead of seeking to reach heaven with bricks, they are using great rockets to escape from the influence of the earth and to search the vault of heaven. Are they not inviting, as did the builders of Babel, the judgment of God on their works and on themselves?

Abraham's Call from Ur of the Chaldees At the call of God, Abraham left one of the great cities of his day, Ur of the Chaldees, and became a stranger and a pilgrim in the land of Canaan. He was content to move from place to place in obedience to the word of God, not settling down in any of the cities of the land to which God had called him, "for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). Abraham did not find the city for which he looked while he was on earth, for it was a heavenly city; but in the coming day he will have his part in the City of God, where the glory of God rests, and in which God will find His pleasure, and where divine joy will fill the hearts of all who, like Abraham, wait for their portion there.

Lot, who accompanied Abraham when he left Ur of the Chaldees, was a just man, but his eye was on the things of this present world, and he was attracted by that which appealed to the natural senses. At first it was the beauty and fertility of the plain of Jordan that he admired, and that drew him, for it "was well watered every where . . . as the garden of the Lord," but he was eventually allured into Sodom to dwell there, but learned to his cost that the cities of men are not only centres of pleasure, but dens of iniquity that draw upon them the righteous judgment of a holy God.

Nebuchadnezzar's City

Many hundred of years after the building of Babel, the voice of the mighty king Nebuchadnezzar was heard saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30). Although so far removed in time from Nimrod, and from the builders of Babel, this great Gentile monarch was marked by the same indifference to the claims of God, the same pride and self-seeking; and like them, he invited upon his works and upon himself the judgment of God. Nothing of Babel remains for man to see today; and only the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's great Babylon can be seen to witness God's displeasure in man's pride and arrogance. That Great City Babylon From Revelation 18:1-24 we learn that the evils found in the cities of men, down the ages, are concentrated in "Babylon the great," the great religious system of Western civilisation, where the bright light of Christianity has shone for so long. There has been the profession of possessing and valuing the light of God, but the great mass in Christendom have no living link with the Son of God; and when the Lord comes to take His own to heaven, the professing church will be left behind, and exposed, as it is in this Scripture, to be "the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

Instead of seeking the true, abiding, heavenly riches, the false church has enriched itself with the things of this present world, adorning herself with that which attracts the great, the wise, and the learned of this world, instead of seeking the glory and the praise of God. Instead of fasting during the time of the rejection and absence of her Lord, she has been feasting with those who crucified Him; and she has sought the honour and glory of a world that knows not God, and that still refuses His Son.

All that has resulted from man's building will soon receive from God its irrevocable judgment, and be found in irretrievable ruin. This is plainly foretold in our chapter, where it is written, "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." Revelation 18:21. In patience and longsuffering God has borne with men, giving time for repentance; but the time is fast approaching when He will no longer tolerate man's sin, for He cannot for ever allow His fair creation to be defiled. How solemn it is to find the accumulation of the evil of the ages in that which bears Christ's Name and professes allegiance to Him. When the divine judgment is poured out upon Babylon the great, every department of man's world will be remembered. The musical world that began with Jubal is not forgotten, for "the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee." God was pleased to have the music of David in connection with the temple worship, and He will again have music from Israel on earth; but the music of man's world, which is used to charm his heart away from God, is marked out for judgment. In this, the Spirit's day, instrumental music has no place in the worship of God, for we worship by the Spirit of God, and sing with the spirit, and with the understanding (Php 3:3; 1 Corinthians 14:15). The world of Tubal-cain, with its art, inventive and constructive skills, comes into remembrance in this day of judgment, for "no craftsman, of whatever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee." All the vaunted progress of man in the realm of science and art will be brought to a sudden and violent end, for all the wonderful inventions of science have been applied for the comfort, pleasure and pride of man; they have been used to keep man at a distance from God, and to make man happy in a world without God.

Riches and material prosperity have come to Christendom through "the sound of the millstone," but it shall be heard "no more at all in thee." The mill-stone tells us of the industrial world, and the industrial revolutions in Western Europe have brought to these lands "fulness of bread"; and, like Sodom and Israel, when in prosperity, there has been pride of heart, luxury, leisure, and forgetfulness of God.

How loudly man boasts in Christendom of his educational systems with their learning and philosophy; and this is what he is taking to the dark places of the earth for the enlightening of the heathen. Once it was the light of the Gospel that was offered to those in spiritual darkness, but this has largely degenerated to "the light of the candle," that which man has made for his own illumination. As they have rejected the light of the knowledge of the glory of God that shines in the face of Jesus Christ, God has rejected them, and will bring their learning and philosophy into judgment, for it "shall shine no more at all in thee." The pleasures of the social world are indicated in "the voice of the bridegroom and the bride." If there is any true and pure joy to be found in this world it is where the voice of the bridegroom and the bride is heard. But Christendom has found its joys without Christ, and because of this the voice of joy "shall be heard no more at all in thee." How great is the contrast between the false church and the true. Here, the false church loses for

ever all that it called joy; but in the next chapter we read, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7). The false church has sought the "pleasures of sin for a season," and has lost them for ever; the true has sought and found with Christ in heaven the "pleasures for evermore."

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Meditations on the Song of Deborah

Meditations on the Song of Deborah

No. 1

Introduction The opening verses of the book of Judges are full of promise for the prosperity of God's earthly people, Israel, as they manifest their dependence on God in asking His counsel for the war against the Canaanites. It seemed as if they had learned the lesson of their failures at Ai, where, acting in self-confidence, without the word of Jehovah, or any thought of consulting Him, they rushed into battle in their own fancied strength, only to be miserably defeated and routed by the enemy.

How very refreshing it is to find such dependence on God; and good to see the great results of seeking His guidance, for Judah secured many outstanding victories, and it is written in Judges 1:19, "And Jehovah was with Judah." The only fly in this precious ointment is found in the same verse, where we read, "he did not dispossess the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron." Had there been, on the part of Judah, unflinching confidence in God until the end of the campaign, we may take it as certain that the chariots of iron that belonged to the inhabitants of the valley would have been no match for those of whom Jehovah had said, "I have delivered the land into his hand." And are we not often like Judah? We seek the will of the Lord, and so long as we continue in dependence upon Him there is triumph; but so often, for one reason and another, our confidence in Him wanes, and the victory is not complete.

We may not be able to say whether or not the failure of Judah was because he sought the help of his brother Simeon. In certain circumstances it is right and proper to seek the help of our brethren, but we should be sure that it is the Lord's mind for us to do so. There was certainly nothing in Jehovah's answer to suggest that He meant Simeon to go with Judah, and it may have been because of reliance on the help of Simeon instead of undivided confidence in God that He allowed the inhabitants of the valley to withstand the victorious tribe of Judah.

If there was failure with Judah to enter fully into possession of all that Jehovah had given him, alas, it was the same with some of the other tribes. The two and a half tribes that were content to remain on the wilderness side of the Jordan did not fully enter into what God had for them; and it is recorded not only of Judah, but also of Benjamin, Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher and Naphtali, that they "did not dispossess" the enemy in parts of the inheritance allotted to them. With Dan things were even worse, for "the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the hill-country, for he would not suffer them to come down to the valley" (See Judges 1:21, Judges 1:27, Judges 1:29-31, Judges 1:33-34). Do not these things have a voice for us, the people of God, in this day? Have we been content to remain on the wilderness side of the Jordan, and thus come short of God's purpose for us? It may be, on the other hand, that we have in some measure, like Judah and the other tribes, that had their inheritance in the land, been content to allow the enemy to rob us of what God meant us to possess. Spiritual energy is needed to enter into possession of what

God has given to us in His grace; and He has also given to us the panoply that enables us to be victorious over all our foes (Ephesians 6:10-18). When we come to Judges 2:1-23 we learn something of the cause of Israel's failure to take possession of the inheritance, for the Angel of Jehovah came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and convicted them of disobedience to the word of Jehovah. This was the real cause of their troubles. God had said to Israel, "Ye shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land: ye shall throw down their altars." Because of their disobedience, the Angel of Jehovah said, "I will not drive them out before you: but they shall be (scourges) in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you."

Gilgal was the place to which Israel had come after they crossed the Jordan: the place where twelve stones from the river's bed had been set up as a monument to the might of Jehovah's hand, stretched forth on behalf of His people. There the reproach of Egypt had been rolled away, and there they had eaten of the old corn of the land. In marked contrast with the blessedness of Gilgal is the weeping of Bochim which was the result of Israel's failure. Like them, we can have the celebration of the Lord's goodness, if we act in obedience to the word of God; or we can experience the effects of our failure in the weeping of Bochim.

Just as the Angel of Jehovah had forewarned, Israel were ensnared with the idols of the land of Canaan; they forsook Jehovah who had done so much for them, and "served Baal and the Ashtoreths." Time and again God sold His people into the hands of their enemies, because of their sins; but when they cried to Him, in His great mercy, He sent them a deliverer. Othniel the son of Kenaz, was used of God to deliver Israel from the yoke of Chusan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and Ehud to rescue them from Eglon king of Moab.

After the death of Ehud, Israel resumed their sinful ways, and Jehovah gave them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, the captain of whose army was Sisera. This powerful king, with his nine hundred chariots of iron, "mightily oppressed the children of Israel twenty years" (Judges 4:1-3). Under the oppression of Jabin, the children of Israel cried to Jehovah, and in spite of all their repeated failures, He heard their cry.

It was a day of great weakness, as is disclosed in the song of Deborah, when she said, "Was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?" Besides, Israel was judged by a woman, "Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth." When rule is in the hand of a woman it is evidence of failure on the part of the man. Not only is the husband the head of the wife, but the man is the head of the woman in the divine order, and headship involves leadership.

Without weapons, and without leadership, the weakness of God's people is further emphasised when Barak, the son of Abinoam, is called to lead the army at the command of Jehovah, and he refuses to go without the support of Deborah, and this in spite of divine assurance of victory, and divine instructions in relation to the army and the place of battle.

How slow we are to enter into the thoughts of God, and how feeble our faith is often proved to be in the hour of trial. If Barak will not act on the divine command without the support of a woman, then to a woman will be the chief honour in the hour of victory. As we shall see, the very weakness of Israel brought out the fulness of God's provision for the hour of need. If there were no weapons with Israel, God enabled them to procure them for the day of battle; and if there were no leaders in evidence, God prepared them in secret and brought them forward for the hour of need.

After the crushing victory, Deborah and Barak sing together the praise of Jehovah; and the opening words of the song are rich in instruction for us: "For that leaders led in Israel, For that the people willingly offered themselves, Bless Jehovah!"

Leadership, which had been so sadly lacking before the great battle, is first of all mentioned in the song, and therefore indicates its great importance in the things of God. When there is true leadership, the people will willingly offer themselves in the service of the Lord, but without it, the people are likely to go astray, even as we read at the close of this book, "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). At the beginning of the church's history, there was true leadership among the people of God. The Lord chose the twelve apostles, not only to preach the word, but to care for His people. Under the leadership of the twelve, the disciples, at the beginning, "persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and prayers" (Acts 2:42). True leadership was also manifested by the apostle Paul, who could write, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Some of the features of a true leader are given to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where these words have been penned, "Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their conversation, imitate their faith . . . obey your leaders, and be submissive; for they watch over your souls as those that shall give account" (Hebrews 13:7; Hebrews 13:17).

What is first of all noted is the teaching of the leaders who are divinely commended. They did not speak of themselves or of the things of the world. Human and religious traditions, the philosophy and learning of the world, and what appealed to the mind and nature of man, had no place in their ministry. It was God's word they brought before the saints of God. Nothing but God's word can begin the divine work within the soul; producing a divine nature that can only be nourished by the word which produced it. There are many who take the place of leaders in the professing church today: they are not true leaders if they do not speak the word of God. The manner of life of a true leader will be in consonance with the word he ministers. Paul could write to the Corinthians that he and Timothy did not falsify "the word of God, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every conscience of men before God" (2 Corinthians 4:2). They practised what they preached. In writing to Timothy, the apostle can say, "thou hast been thoroughly acquainted with my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith . . ." (2 Timothy 3:10). The Son of God on earth perfectly expressed in His life the word He spoke, even as He said, I am "altogether that which I also say to you" (John 8:25). In considering the issue of the manner of life of a true leader, the Hebrews were to imitate his faith. A life lived apart from this world can only be sustained by faith in the Son of God. Many examples of men of faith had been brought before the Hebrews in Hebrews 11:1-40, and Jesus had been presented to them as the "leader and completer of faith" in Hebrews 12:1-29 : now they are exhorted to imitate the faith of their leaders in Hebrews 13:1-25. A true leader will not be influenced by the things of this passing world; he will be occupied by what is unseen and eternal, that which is connected with Christ within the veil of heaven, and that which will be brought into display in Christ in the world to come. The true leader is not only watchful of his own manner of life, so as to be an example for those he seeks to lead, but he watches over the souls of the saints, conscious that he walks and labours under the eye of God, and that he will have to give account to God at the judgment seat. Such are not concerned with their own interests: they seek

the advancement of the things of Christ, and therefore care for those who are His.

We cannot doubt that there was some connection between the leaders leading and "the people willingly" offering themselves. Confidence in their leaders would produce the willingness on the part of the people. It was a good partnership, and without it the battle would not have been so successful. The leaders could not have carried out their task without the willing people; nor could the people without good leaders.

While the responsibility of both leaders and led enters into this, as indeed at all times in the conflict of good over evil, yet we can see that God was working in secret to prepare the leaders and the willing people. The hearts of all men are in His hand: but when it is His service, there is the working of divine grace in the hearts of His own to prepare them for the part to which He calls them in His service.

Moses required forty years in the backside of the desert to fit him to lead God's people out of Egypt and through the wilderness. No doubt God used his education in Egypt in forming the vessel for His service, but the forty years were needed to empty the vessel of that with which it had been filled during its formation. It was the same with Saul of Tarsus: he required three years in Arabia to be emptied of what he had acquired in the schools of this world, and to be filled in the school of God.

Men say that leaders are born; but the leaders of this world are men with different features to those who lead in the things of God. The leaders of this world are usually aggressive, self-confident and full of the knowledge of the world. The marks of the leaders prepared in the school of God are meekness, gentleness, lowliness; the features manifested perfectly in Christ. They have no confidence in the flesh, they are filled with the knowledge of God's will, they live in separation from the world, and their minds are engaged with Christ and His things in heaven, and they wait for their portion with Him in the world to come. When there are such leaders in evidence, the people of God will willingly offer themselves. In the opening of her song, Deborah is able to praise Jehovah that there were leaders in Israel who manifested the true marks of leadership, leading the people according to the command of God; and also because the people thus led, willingly offered themselves for conflict in a day of great weakness. Very often the leaders of the people of God, both in Judaism and in Christianity, have led God's people in a way contrary to His will, and the people have been quite willing to pursue a wrong course. This is evinced in Jeremiah 5:30-31, where it is written, "An appalling and horrible thing is committed in the land: the prophets prophesy falsehood, and the priests rule by their means; and my people love (to have it) so. But what will ye do in the end thereof?" How blessed it is when the saints of God are under the influence of godly leadership: it is indeed something for which to "Bless Jehovah."

Deborah is conscious of the dignity and nobility of her song, and therefore calls upon kings and princes to give ear while she sings to Jehovah. Under the guidance of the Spirit of God, the prophetess in her song speaks of great events, for the victory "by the waters of Megiddo" that day presages a yet more mighty triumph against the forces of evil. Of this we read in Revelation 16:1-21; where, under the influence of Satan and his instruments, "the kings of the whole habitable world" are gathered together at Megiddo, or Armageddon, "to the war of (that) great day of God the Almighty." It is good then for us, the saints of this day, to learn what the Spirit of God has to teach us in this remarkable song.

We are taken back to the time when Israel, under the leading of the cloud of glory, which told of Jehovah's presence, started their journey towards the land of promise. It was a time of blessing for God's people, and all the nations around had the dread of a nation led by Jehovah upon them. Jehovah's going forth from Seir indicates the direction in which the glory cloud appeared, and the marching tells of Jehovah's leading of His army. Rahab told the spies "that the dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard that Jehovah dried up the waters of the Red Sea before you when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did to the two kings of the Amorites" (Joshua 2:9-10). The peoples trembled, and their great men quaked, because of Jehovah, the God of Israel; but for Israel there was the refreshment of God's presence, told out in rain from the clouds of heaven.

Turning from the time when Israel was led in triumph by Jehovah, Deborah portrays the sad condition of the nation of Israel in her own days. Shamgar, who followed Ehud (Judges 3:31), was noted for his great deed of valour, as was also Jael for her dealings with Sisera; but they were days of weakness and ruin in the land, for "The roads were unused, and the travellers on highways went by crooked paths. The villages ceased in Israel." Is there not in this an indication of the conditions prevailing in our days? There may be great things done by individuals, but things generally are in a state of ruin and weakness. God has indicated for us in His word the way we should take, but alas! His road is unused. The saints of God are content to take some other road than that plainly marked out for us in the Holy Scriptures. Instead of taking the highways that make straight paths for our feet, so many walk in crooked paths, and others are turned aside (see Hebrews 12:13). The villages, where God's people should have been dwelling together in peace and security, had ceased to exist. Are we not reminded by this of how the saints of God for centuries, through fear of the enemy, lost the privileges that belonged to the assemblies of God?

Deborah was evidently greatly exercised about the ruin and proceeds to tell us the causes of it. This "Mother in Israel" cared for God's people. She sought their welfare; but she was well aware of the extent of the ruin, and of the causes of it. Israel had forsaken Jehovah their God, and had chosen new gods, the gods of the nations around against which God had forewarned them. Because of their sins, God allowed war to come, and this exposed their weakness and helplessness, for there was not a shield or a spear among forty thousand in Israel.

Such is the result of departure from God; a sorrowful result that is not confined to God's ancient people, Israel. If we get away from the Lord, and seek the things of this present world, we shall expose ourselves to the enemy. Some one might say, but surely Christians would not choose new gods? But the Apostle John writes to us, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). Everything that would challenge Christ's right to fill the heart is an idol! And there are many things that have been allowed into the church, and into the Christian's life, that have disputed Christ's claim to reign without a rival. When the church left its first love, it was not long before the Lord has to say to it, "Thou hast those (who) eat of idol sacrifices and commit fornication" (Revelation 2:4; Revelation 2:14). With the church, as with individuals, when there is departure from Christ, there is no power to meet the enemy: there is neither shield nor spear with the great majority. Our true defence is in nearness to Christ; only then have we the power and the weapons to meet a subtle foe.

It was in this time of weakness and ruin that the call came from Jehovah, and Deborah sings in triumph, "My heart is toward the governors of Israel, who offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless Jehovah!" And is there not a call from the Lord for faithful men today? There can be no denying the ruin of the church; and while we must take account of it, it is not a reason for allowing the hands to hang down, but rather for seeking to answer to the call of the Lord. There were no doubt many governors in Israel who heard the call, but who did not respond to it; but for those who did answer, Deborah blesses Jehovah. The people, as seen in Judges 5:2, "willingly offered themselves"; here, the governors who answered to the call "offered themselves willingly among the people."

Those who govern, those to whom the Lord has given the grace to be concerned with the maintenance of divine order in the assembly, must be prepared to take part in the conflict when the need arises. Timothy was not only to communicate to faithful men the truth ministered by the apostle Paul; he was to take his "share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3); and to carry out what the Lord gave him to do, he was to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Where there is the willing heart, the Lord will supply the grace to serve Him, whether it be in caring for His people, or in standing firm to maintain the precious truth the Lord has given them to minister. The prophetess calls upon the different classes to consider what had taken place. First there are those "that ride on white she-asses," the sons of the kings; then the nobility who are at ease, those "that sit on carpets"; and lastly, the common people, who "walk by the way." Whether riding, sitting or walking, her words are to be considered. That is, she desires them to be pondered by all classes, and at all times. The victors not only had their portion, as dividing the spoil "in the midst of the places of drawing water," but there, where they rested and were refreshed, they could "rehearse the righteous acts of Jehovah." While enjoying the fruits of their victory they do not speak of what they had done, but of what Jehovah had done in His righteousness. They are thinking of what the Lord was doing for His people, of "His righteous acts toward His villages in Israel."

God had allowed the villages of Israel to cease, because of the idolatry of the people, and in the hour of victory this is not forgotten. The victors not only tasted Jehovah's goodness, but they spoke of His righteousness. And having thus considered God's righteous acts, "Then the people of Jehovah went down to the gates." In the hour of triumph the people return to the place of judgment, surely indicating their desire to walk in the light of God's will, according to His word.

Deborah, who had gone with Barak to the battle, has her part in the victory, and celebrates it by uttering her song. Barak, who led the triumphant army of Jehovah, is called upon to lead his captives into captivity. Those who had followed Barak are seen as "the remnant of nobles"; and Jehovah is called upon to come down with the prophetess into the midst of His mighty ones. It is the victory of Jehovah, and He is to be surrounded by those who have answered to His call, the true nobility of His people. No doubt Barak as leading captivity captive comes before us as a type of Him who secured the great victory over all the forces of evil by going into death. And this expression not only reminds us of Psalms 68:18, but also of its quotation in Ephesians 4:8-10, and of Colossians 2:15, "having spoiled principalities and authorities, He made a show of them publicly, leading them in triumph by it." What an amazing spectacle that must have been for the heavenly hosts, to witness the triumph of the risen Christ as He came from the fastness of death, leading in mighty power those who sought to accomplish His destruction at the cross!

Having spoken of the victors as the noble and the mighty, Deborah singles out the tribes who took part in the conflict. There was Ephraim, first in the roll of honour, and those who came had their seat in Amalek. They were like those of Pergamos, to whom the Lord said, "I know where thou dwellest, where the throne of Satan (is); and thou holdest fast my Name, and hast not denied my faith, even in the days in which Antipas my faithful witness (was) slain among you, where Satan dwells" (Revelation 2:13). The presence of Amalek among the people of Ephraim was the witness of their failure; yet, in spite of all the weakness and the failure, there were those who proved faithful to Jehovah in the time of testing.

After Ephraim was Benjamin, among the peoples of Jehovah. There may be nothing outstanding to record of Benjamin, but he was ready to take his place and his part among the people in the time of conflict. Like the Philadelphians of Revelation 3:1-22, they may have had but "a little power," yet they were faithful. They answered the call of Jehovah in simple obedience, as did those to whom the Lord said, "thou hast kept My Word, and hast not denied My Name."

"Out of Machir," the son of Manasseh, "came down governors." those who administered the law of God. These were ready, not only to administer what Jehovah had commanded in times of peace, but to take their part in days of conflict. Those who truly seek God's will among the people of God must be prepared to enter into conflict for the truth, to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

"Out of Zebulun" there were "those that handled the staff of the ruler," or of the scribe. The doctors of the law from Zebulun were very different to those who opposed the Lord Jesus when He was on earth. At Megiddo the scribes were valiant in withstanding the enemies of God, but how sorrowful to find this class bitterly assailing the Divine Servant of God, seeking to entangle Him in His words, and uniting with those who crucified Him. Those who are instructed in the mind and will of God, and who teach the divine commandments, should be prepared, like the scribes of Zebulun, to obey the command of God in the hour of danger.

"And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; and Issachar, like Barak; they were sent into the valley at his feet." The princes, as brought into the company of Deborah, were in the place of greatest privilege, for the prophetess had the mind of God, and was the one who communicated it to Israel. In this respect, they were like Barak. But while sharing the place of Barak in communion, they were in the place of subjection to him, being sent into the valley of Megiddo under his command. And how blessed it is for us to know that we have been brought in the grace of God to share Christ's place before the face of God the Father, even as it is written, "As He is, so are we, in this world." Yet, while this exalted privilege is ours, we must never forget that Jesus is our Lord, and our place is "at His feet." Like Mary of Bethany, we are to be found at His feet to learn His word; to bring our sorrows and difficulties to Him for solution; and to worship and adore. In the conflict we are to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

There was a very marked contrast between the portion enjoyed by the princes and the people of Issachar and that of Reuben. "In the divisions of Reuben there were great resolves of heart": there was a great deal of exercise as to what they should do, but they did not act in the day of crisis, and they therefore lost the privilege of standing for God in the conflict. Exercise and great resolves of heart are not enough, there must be the action proceeding from the resolutions. While Reuben was considering and resolving, the princes of Issachar were in the place of privilege with Deborah,

no doubt learning the mind of God; and the people of Issachar were "Like Barak," the man that God had chosen to overthrow the enemy; and "They were sent into the valley at his feet," gladly entering the conflict under the command of God's chosen leader.

Deborah has to say to Reuben, in spite of his great resolves of heart, "Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleating of the sheep?" There is a time to be among the sheep, not to be occupied with their bleating, but to feed them, and to shepherd them, as the Lord commanded Peter; but in the time of conflict we are to be equipped with "The whole armour of God," and to take our share "in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3). Reuben missed a golden opportunity, for while others were enduring the trials of the conflict, and reaping the spoils of victory, "In the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart." No doubt there were lamentations and self-judgments, which were proper after their failure, but these could never make up for the missed opportunity.

How many of us are like Reuben! We have the resolves of heart, and the searchings of heart, but miss many an opportunity to be loyal to the Lord in the time of testing. "Gilead," which included Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, "abode beyond Jordan." They were not like an earlier generation who, though electing to dwell on the wilderness side of Jordan, said, "We ourselves will go with diligence armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them to their place" (Numbers 32:17). With Gad, and probably the half tribe of Manasseh, there were not even the resolves of heart or the heart searching that marked Reuben. They were content, without caring for God's interests in the land, to settle down in their own things beyond the Jordan. But Gilead were not alone in their inactivity, for Deborah asks of Dan, "Why did he remain in ships?" Dan was not concerned with the conflicts of Jehovah: he was busily engaged in commerce, prospering in the things of the world while his brethren were endangering their lives on the field of battle. This needs but little comment, for we all know that Paul's words to the saints at Philippi are still true, "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

Some, like Dan, seek prosperity in present things; others, like Asher, seek ease and safety, for "Asher sat on the sea-shore, and abode in his creeks." It is very pleasant to the natural man to rest in the attractive atmosphere of the sea-shore; and very comforting to have the sense of personal security in the creeks; but it was altogether unworthy of God's people to be caring for their own interests in the time of crisis, and in the day of battle. There was not only the responsibility to help in the time of danger, but the privilege of manifesting loyalty to Jehovah their God. Dan was like those who hid their light under the "bushel" of business, and Asher like those who hid their light under the "bed" of ease (Mark 4:21). In marked contrast to Dan and Asher, "Zebulun is a people that jeoparded their lives unto death"; they were prepared to sacrifice all, even life itself, to procure the liberty of the people of God; and they have had the rich reward of having this recorded on the page of inspiration. And the self-sacrifice, privilege and honour of Zebulun were shared by Naphtali, for "Naphtali also, on the high places of the field" put their lives in jeopardy. These two faithful tribes remind us of the saints in Smyrna, to whom the Lord said, "Fear nothing (of) what thou art about to suffer . . . Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). The tribe of Zebulun came from the conflict with double honours. First, in Judges 5:14, the leaders of the tribe received an honourable mention, then in Judges 5:18, the whole tribe, the common people, received the highest commendation. This calls to mind that the Apostle Paul, when writing to the saints at Philippi, addressed not only the saints, but also those

who cared for them, the "overseers and ministers." The commendation, "I thank my God for my whole remembrance of you," was for the leaders as also for the led. From Judges 5:19-22 a description of the great battle is given. It is a great battle chiefly because of its important typical significance. Fought at Megiddo, it typifies the time of slaughter in store for the nations, who shall be gathered together at Armageddon, just before the Lord Jesus sets up His kingdom on earth. Here it is written, "Kings came — they fought; Then fought the kings of Canaan at Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo." In the great day of Armageddon there will not only be the kings of Canaan, but "the kings from the rising of the sun," and "the kings of the whole habitable world" (Revelation 16:12; Revelation 16:14).

Like Jabin the king of Canaan, and Sisera his commander in chief, the kings of the last days will take "no spoil of silver." Instead of spoiling, they will be spoiled, even as is prophesied in Zechariah 14:1-21, "And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the nations round about shall be gathered together — gold, and silver, and garments, in great abundance" (Zechariah 14:14). Judah and Simeon, are not mentioned in Deborah's song, but Judah will not miss the final honours in the conflicts of the last days.

Barak and his willing helpers would have been no match for the armies of Jabin, but they went forth relying on the word of Jehovah, and "From heaven was the fight, the stars from their courses fought with Sisera." God is not a disinterested spectator in the conflicts of His people: at the right moment He intervenes with His heavenly resources to secure the victory for His own. How often was this in evidence throughout the chequered history of God's earthly people! In the days of the Judges as in the days of Joshua, and as in the days of the kings of Israel, whenever Israel turned to the Lord for His help, they did not call in vain. And what was true of Israel is true of ourselves: we have never called in vain for the help of the Lord.

There was not only the unseen arm of divine power acting for Deborah and Barak, but "The torrent of Kishon swept them away." God intervened providentially with the forces of nature to complete the rout of the powerful armed forces of Jabin. Deborah, as the instrument of God, can say, "My soul, thou hast trodden down strength!" as she recalls "the horse-hoofs clatter with the coursings, the coursing of their steeds." All the mighty power of the enemy is trodden beneath the feet of God's servant who trusts in Him. For our-selves, we should have no fear of our foes; God has provided us with His armour to enable us to withstand every assault, and "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16:20).

Meroz would appear to have been some township in a specially favoured position to have helped with the destruction of Sisera's army: but Meroz seems deliberately to have refused to come "to the help of Jehovah, to the help of Jehovah among the mighty": and because of this bring upon themselves the curse of the Angel of Jehovah. In refusing to help Deborah and Barak, Meroz had refused to help Jehovah. This is the only mention of Meroz in Scripture. It was evidently a large town, but had a wonderful opportunity to serve Jehovah, but the opportunity was lost: and the curse pronounced decided that it would be for ever forgotten, except in relation to its curse.

There is surely a word of warning for all here, not to miss the golden' opportunities in time for serving the Lord. Soon we shall have for ever left this world, and the day of opportunity will be over. But in this there is a special warning for those who have not started to serve the Lord, those who have heard the Gospel message, and are perhaps professed Christians, but who, in reality,

have no living link with the Saviour. While the Apostle Paul was sending salutations to the saints at Corinth, he added, "If any one love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha" (1 Corinthians 16:22). How very solemn is this word! And how many professed Christians will receive this curse at the coming of the Lord! Like Meroz, they were among the people of God, but the day of conflict proved that there was no real devotion to the One they professed to serve.

Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, stands out in marked contrast to Meroz, for her action in the conflict brought upon her a peculiar blessing, for she was "Blessed above women," and the prophetess takes pleasure in detailing her famous deed. Like Meroz, she had a golden opportunity that would never come her way again, and she literally seized it with both hands, one hand holding the tent peg, the other wielding the hammer. It was not a natural action for a woman, but it was an act of faith; the feelings of nature being controlled by the faith that discerned what she should do to help in the deliverance of God's people. It was not merely an act of patriotism: it was an act of faith. The action of Rahab might be judged unpatriotic, but her faith put the interests of God and His people before the interests of her nation and city. The claims of God must come before the feelings of nature or the claims of men. The enemy of God's people, and all related to him, are utterly confounded. Instead of the expected victory with lavish spoils, there is defeat and destruction. The palm of triumph, and the rejoicings are with God's people, and the mourning with those who thought to keep them in bonds, and to spoil them. But Deborah attributes all to Jehovah. The enemy of Israel was the enemy of Jehovah to her, so she can say, "So let all Thine enemies perish, Jehovah!" So will it be at the end! All those that come against Israel in the last days, whether from the West, the East or the North, all shall bring upon themselves the consuming judgment of God. As for God's people, at the end, the law shall be written in their hearts, and they shall "love Him," and because of this they shall "be as the rising of the sun in its might." They shall take character from Him who shall "arise as the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings" (Malachi 4:2). After Deborah's victory, "The land had rest forty years," but after the Lord comes and secures the mighty victory for His people, the land will have rest for the long Millennial day, the Day of Christ; and the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Wm. C. Reid.

Kings shall fall down before Him, And gold and incense bring;

All nations shall adore Him, His praise all people sing.

S. New Creation.

New Creation.

Wm. C. Reid. In Scripture "creation" is mentioned in different ways, each presenting some special feature for the instruction of the saints of God, e.g., Proverbs 8:1-36. brings the Lord Jesus before us as the Man of God's counsels, witnessing the scene in which He would be found with His companions for the pleasure and glory of God. John 1:1-51, Colossians 1:1-29, and Hebrews 1:1-14, declare the glory of the Person of the Son; whereas Ephesians 3:1-21 tells us that the present purpose of the creation was to make known to heavenly intelligences in the church, the manifold wisdom of God. The most detailed account of creation is that given in Genesis 1:1-31; Genesis 2:1-25; and there man is presented as its head and centre. The ruin of the old creation. That God has spoken of "new creation" in His word, implies that the creation connected with Adam has become old, and is passing away. Scripture confirms this, showing too that the creation has become ruined by reason of man's sin. When Adam fell, all under his headship shared the consequences of his fall (Romans 8:19-22). In this Scripture God has shown that before the old creation shall pass away, it shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into which Adam brought it. The passing of the old world: the beginning of a new. From Adam there has sprung a race of men, connected with him in the old creation, all sinners by nature and practice. Cain, Adam's firstborn, demonstrated the hatred that lay in the nature of man, by killing his brother; and soon the world that was stained with Abel's blood became so corrupt that God had to cleanse it with a flood of water. A new world emerged from the Flood, with Noah as its head; but soon poor Noah showed he could not control himself, much less the new world. Although it was a new world it was not new creation: every successive generation and development of God's dealings with men proved that man was incorrigible, and that the old creation was ruined beyond recovery. Headship in Noah was debased; Priesthood was defiled in the sons of Aaron: the sons of Samuel perverted judgment. Royalty was dishonoured by the sons of David, the Kings of Israel, and by the great Gentile monarchs. All this evil was consummated in the world's rejection of the Son of God. In His cross the world was exposed by God, and its judgment was sealed.

God working — amidst the ruins of the old creation. When the Jews persecuted the Lord Jesus for healing the impotent man on the Sabbath day. He replied, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:1-47) From the moment of man's fall in Eden, it would seem as if the rest of God was broken, and He began to work afresh in view of a "new creation." In consonance with His Father's activity, the Son had come into Manhood and to the earth to work for the establishing of a scene where the Father could rest in His love, no more to be disturbed by the entrance of sin or any evil that would grieve Him at His heart. To secure this the Son would be found here in toil and labour, laying the foundations in His work and death of that new world where the glory of the new creation could be displayed in those who once were sinners far from God.

God working — preparing vessels for glory. In the riches of His glory, God is preparing for glory, vessels of mercy (Romans 9:23). These are the saints who at present have earthly tabernacle

houses, while awaiting their "house not made with hands eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1-21) God has wrought His saints for this glorious destiny, by forming them spiritually in new creation; so that while they are connected with the groaning creation in their bodies they are already in new creation as to their spiritual condition. Amid the ruins of the old creation, God is working to produce the vessels in which the glory of the new creation shall be displayed. A beautiful illustration of this is found in 2 Chronicles 4:1-22, where, after describing the vessels of the Temple, it says, "In the plain of the Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay-ground between Succoth and Zeredathah."

God working — preparing vessels for testimony. But God has not only been preparing the saints for glory; His new creative work is to produce vessels in which His grace may even here be manifested. This is the teaching of Ephesians 2:1-22, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Good works can never be produced by man in the flesh, but those who have been created in Christ have divinely given ability to work in a manner that glorifies God and gives Him pleasure. As created "in Christ" we partake of Christ's character and are thus enabled to manifest His features of grace and beauty. From this we learn something of God's present triumph. Satan in getting rid of Christ doubtless thought that he secured a complete victory, but God wrought in such a way that many vessels, every one of Christ's order and character, as created in Him, are now upon the earth continuing the heavenly life that was perfectly manifested in Him here.

Relationships of the flesh, and the new relationships. The subject of new creation in 2 Corinthians 5:1-21 is introduced with, "Wherefore, henceforth know we no one after the flesh: yea though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore, if any man be in Christ (there is) new creation." After the flesh, the Lord Jesus was of Israel, and the Son of David; but none of the relationships that were His on this line, belong to Him in the new conditions into which He entered in resurrection. These were all relinquished at the cross, when He said to His mother, "Woman, behold thy son," and to John, "Behold thy mother." This was further emphasised when in resurrection the Lord said to Mary Magdalene, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God." In those words, which told that Mary could no longer know Christ after the flesh, there was the divine revelation of the new relationships into which the Lord had brought His own in resurrection. The disciples were called "friends" previously by the Lord, but not until He had entered the new conditions of life in resurrection could they be called His "brethren."

"Old things are passed away — all things are become new." The things that have been corrupted and defiled by man in the old creation have no place in the new creation. Everything in this spiritual sphere is new and of God. The life and relationships are new; so are the affections, joys, blessings, riches and glories. In this new order our thoughts and feelings are new, and the desires of the heart and disposition of the renewed mind are toward things that the natural man has never known. Much that exists in the old creation was introduced by man; but in the new creation all things are of God. Not a single principle of man's world is there; none of his philosophy or vaunted learning, none of the embellishments that adorn his city, nor any of the attractions that appeal to the flesh.

Reconciliation and New Creation.

All the things of this new creation have their origin in the God Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. Evidently God has brought us into right relations with Himself to have us engaged with the things that belong to Him. Through the death of His Son He has brought us near, who once were far off; and in shedding abroad His love in our hearts by the gift of the Holy Spirit He has displaced the enmity towards Him that once was there. Now, as before God in the sense of His love, and as being His workmanship, we are free to explore the wonders of the new creation centring in Christ His beloved Son. These two matters are not only associated in 2 Corinthians 5:1-21, but they are found together in Ephesians 2:16. In the latter Scripture, Jew and Gentile are reconciled together to God in one body. As forming the body of Christ in new creation, the church is the vessel in which the features of Christ are manifested now upon the earth and in which the glory of God shall be , displayed in the coming ages. A man in Christ.

Paul by the Spirit said in 2 Corinthians 5:1-21, "If any man be in Christ (there is) new creation." Chapter 12. of this epistle gives the experience of a man in Christ. Viewed abstractly as a man in Christ, Paul reveals that he was caught up to the third heavens, the home of the man in Christ. There, in Paradise, the place of delight, he heard things he could not speak of on earth. Our present condition of flesh and blood hinders our knowing the full blessedness of what is ours in Christ, for we only "see through a glass darkly"; but there are many things we can know, the things freely given to us of God, the things "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man — God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." The new man — his creation. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, the Father opened the heavens and said, "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I have found my delight." Here was a Man entirely different to every other man; and it was God's purpose to have a race of men, all like Christ. In the "new man" this race has been created. The Jew and Gentile were two men at enmity, because of the law; but in the cross the cause of the enmity was removed, and Christ created in Himself of both one "new man," and so made peace. Neither of these two men could give God pleasure; so that an entirely new kind of man had to be created in Christ's features. This new man has been created after God in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24); and in him there is nothing of "Greek, Jew, circumcision, uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman, but Christ is everything, and in all" (Colossians 3:11). Not only are the distinctions between these different kinds of men not found in the new man, but not one of them bears his features, for all his features come from Christ; and Christ is the life of all partaking in this new created man. The new man — his testimony.

After disclosing in Ephesians 4:1-32 that the new man is created after God, the saints are exhorted, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak truth every man with his neighbour." From this and the verses which follow we learn that the features of the new man are to be manifested in all our dealings with our neighbours. Then there are exhortations with a view to the manifestation of the traits of the new man in the family and business circles. Finally, in the conflict, with the panoply of God, which is the dress of the new man, we are to stand for God in the evil day. In all these spheres the features of the new man are to evince the testimony of God. The display of new creation.

God's purpose in quickening us and setting us in Christ in the heavenly places is in order "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in

Christ Jesus." This is the display of grace in glory; and for this God is erecting a Temple, a shrine, in which His holy nature shall shine forth, in those united to His Son. The church is this vessel of glory; seen in Ephesians 2:21 as "A holy temple in the Lord," and in Revelation 21:1-27 as "The bride, the Lamb's wife — the holy city — having the glory of God." Amid the tumults of the systems of this present age, loudly proclaiming their own greatness and glory, God is silently raising His structure, which is the fruit of Christ's work, and the crown of His workmanship. Long after every human system has perished for ever, this glorious church, conceived in divine wisdom and wrought by God's power shall subsist in the eternal display of His love and glory in new creation. The rule of new creation.

After discoursing on law and grace, in his defence of the Gospel, towards the close of the epistle to the Galatians, Paul says, "For in Christ Jesus, neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision; but new creation. And as many as walk by this rule, peace upon them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." Judaism and its ceremonial rite of circumcision were for man in the flesh, and in them Israel boasted; but in the light of new creation they have been exposed as valueless. The old order, which supposed there was ability in man to obtain divine blessing, has been closed in the cross; and the new order, in which "all things are of God" has been opened up for us in God's grace in new creation. Those who walk by the rule of law cannot have peace while striving for blessing which they cannot obtain; but those walking by the rule of the new creation, who do not depend on their own efforts, receive divine mercy, and the peace which comes from relying solely on God. May we therefore live by the faith of the Son of God, seeking the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and thus be blessed by walking by the rule of new creation. Wm. C. Reid.

S. Now is my soul troubled

"Now is my soul troubled" The awful sufferings of the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane are not brought before us by the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel, even though the garden is mentioned in the first verse of chapter 18; nevertheless there are sufferings of which we read in this Gospel that, in their depths, are beyond our comprehension. How intense were the sufferings of Jesus when those to whom He brought the rich grace of God sought to kill Him, when He was rejected and insulted by the leaders of the nation, and unrighteously condemned to death by Pontius Pilate. Yet even these sufferings are not to be compared with the infinite sufferings sustained when His soul was made an offering for sin. Among the many sufferings, there were those which we shall contemplate as presented in John's Gospel.

"He groaned in spirit and was troubled"

It is surpassing wonderful that the Son of God incarnate should be found entering into the sufferings of mankind with a heart that felt as men felt, yet with feelings that were perfectly holy and unimpaired with the sin that dulls the sensitivity of all true natural feeling. Also the Son of God as a divine Person had a capacity for knowing what sin was in man as no other man could, and a capacity for grief that man could not have. These things enable us to understand that it is impossible for us to know the depths of the sorrows of the Son of God when He was troubled in spirit, and groaned in the presence of sin in this world. Perfect holiness in the nature of the Son of God repelled sin, yet His deep compassion enabled Him to enter sympathetically into what sin had brought upon men. The reason for the groan of the Son of God in John 11:33 was that He saw Mary "weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her." Their sorrow and tears were because of the loss of Lazarus the brother of Mary and Martha, and while Jesus entered into their grief and sorrow, His groaning in the spirit and His being troubled were on account of the awful ravages that death had brought into the world, and this because of sin. God's Son knew as Mary and those who wept with her could not know the dreadful results for man of sin and death, and the deep, deep dishonour that sin had brought upon the holy Name of God before the universe He had created.

"Jesus wept"

Only God the Father could properly enter into the feelings of the Son as He groaned and was troubled, but the Jews were able to observe the tears that told of the deep sympathy of Jesus for those He loved in their time of trouble and sorrow. Death had invaded the home of those He loved, and He was not indifferent to the wounded spirits and broken hearts, even though He knew that He was about to deliver the loved one from the clutch of death, to manifest His own power as Son of God for the glory of His God and Father, and for the joy of His own.

How much would have been lost for the loved ones of Jesus down the centuries if Lazarus had not died. His sickness was indeed "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (John 11:4), and how greatly have the saints of God rejoiced in this display of the glory of God's

Son, and been comforted by the tears shed by Jesus as He wept with Mary. Although the Son of God is now in heaven, His heart is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and His sympathy and compassion are still as real and as great as when He wept by the grave of Lazarus. When His own pass through bereavement they rely on the divine comfort of Him who knows the deepest depths of the feelings of the human heart, whose love and wisdom order all for their greatest good.

"Jesus . . . again groaning in Himself"

There were some who, on seeing the tears of Jesus, said "Behold how He loved him" (John 11:36), and this was surely true as the sisters knew (John 11:3), and as John knew (John 11:5). The tears, while expressing the love of Jesus for Lazarus, also showed that He was not insensible to the cruel wounds of death in the hearts of the sisters of Bethany. There were however some who said, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" (John 11:37). These words produced the second groan from the heart of Jesus.

Jesus could indeed have caused that Lazarus should not have died as His raising him from death showed. His waiting to manifest His glory not only brought to light His compassion and sympathy, but exposed the ignorance and unbelief of the human heart. Martha and Mary were both perplexed at the delay of Jesus to come to them when Lazarus was sick, for they knew that death could not come where He was, but it was not simple perplexity that brought from some the words that really called in question His love for His own, it was the ignorance of unbelief, the refusal to accept that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God, and this brought from Jesus the groan that spoke of His suffering.

"Now is my soul troubled" In the loved circle of Bethany, "Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table" with Jesus, while Mary anointed His feet, the house being filled with the odour of the ointment (John 12:1-3). On entering Jerusalem, Jesus was hailed with the words, "Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the Name of the Lord" (John 12:13), in anticipation of the day of His glory. Greeks also came, saying to Philip, "Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:21), foreshadowing the time when the Gentiles will seek the Lord.

We might have thought that these things would have caused the Lord to rejoice, but instead they brought before His vision what He would have to undergo before there could be fulness of joy for His own, blessing for Israel and blessing for the Gentiles. These things could not be "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die." Only by the work of the cross could His own share His life and place before the Father, and others be blessed, and this involved infinite sufferings for Jesus, for the way into the glory for Him, and for His own, was by suffering and death.

Death was real to the Son of God. He would have to fathom the deepest depths of shame and suffering, meet and overcome the enemy of God and men, then sustain the awful judgment of a righteous and holy God while forsaken of Him. With all this before Him Jesus said, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say?" (John 12:27). It is not now the sorrows of His own that are before Him, nor yet the awful ravages of sin and death, but rather what He must pass through before God could be glorified in the removal of the sin that dishonoured God and brought all the misery into the world, and before He could bring His own into all the rich, divine blessing that God had for them in His eternal purposes of grace and love.

What depths of suffering, sufferings of anticipation of the cross, are expressed in the words, "What shall I say?" If there is a moment of hesitation in His soul as the darkness looms before Him when He would be forsaken of God, it is but for a moment, for at once the Son of God answers His own question with the words, "Father, glorify Thy Name" (John 12:28). He would not consider for Himself, no matter what the cross would mean to Him, for the glory of the Father's Name was more to Him than all He would be subjected to in the hours of His being forsaken.

"Jesus was troubled in spirit"

Jesus knew all that lay before Him, all the grief His soul would know when dishonoured by the leaders of Israel, and ill-treated by Pilate and Herod, not to speak of being forsaken by His disciples. These things would trouble Jesus, but His betrayal by Judas deeply affected the Lord as we learn from the words, "When Jesus had thus said, He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me" (John 13:21). It was sorrowful enough that the Son of God should suffer betrayal, but how much the sorrow was intensified when one who had been so near to Him was the instrument used by Satan for this foul act of treachery. With all that lay before Him, and with the special trial that the betrayal brought to His soul, how wonderful it was that the Son of God could rise above it all to stoop to wash the feet of His disciples, and to unfold to them so much of what lay beyond the cross for Himself and for them, but which depended on the great work He was about to do. How brightly the moral glory of the Son of God shines amidst all the trouble and the groanings that distressed His heart and spirit!

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Paul's Gospel.

Paul's Gospel.

Romans 16:25-27.

(Notes of an address.) The Apostle Paul sums up his ministry in different ways; In Ephesians and Colossians he speaks of himself as minister of the Gospel and minister of the church; in Acts 20:21-27 he testifies of repentance and faith, and of the Gospel of the grace of God; preaches the kingdom of God, and does not shun to declare all the counsel of God; in Romans 16:25 there are three distinct parts of Paul's ministry, firstly, his Gospel; secondly, the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery; thirdly, the mystery itself. Tonight we shall consider Paul's Gospel, and, if the Lord will, shall take up the other two subjects in subsequent addresses.

How wonderful are these great truths that were specially committed to the Apostle Paul! Elements of Paul's Gospel were recovered in the days of Luther, but the wide outline of it was recovered for us, in the goodness of God, during last century, along with the truth of the mystery, and the great truths that are connected with this special, divine revelation. These great truths are of infinite value, and the enemy is seeking to rob us of them today; we have been endeavouring to maintain them, and I have no doubt that beloved brethren elsewhere have also been seeking to maintain them by walking in the light of them. Why is it that the enemy has made such dreadful onslaughts on the poor brethren? It is because of the valuable truths committed to them: they have a precious legacy of truth to maintain, given by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, and the enemy would fain rob them of the truth they enjoy and seek to maintain in the only way in which it can really be maintained, in the affections and translated into practice, both in the individual life, and in relation to the principles of God in the assembly.

Paul's Gospel is essentially the same Gospel as that ministered by Peter and the other Apostles of the Lord Jesus, but it had its own peculiar character, and its special divine revelations, which made it his own. He had not received his Gospel from any human source, nor had the Lord entrusted any individual to deliver it to Paul; he received it directly from the Lord Himself. On the way to Damascus the Lord Jesus met him, and on him, from heaven, shone a light above the brightness of the sun: it was the light of the glory that shone in the face of Jesus. That light gave character to Paul's preaching; it contained in essence the wonderful Gospel given him to declare to the Gentiles. It was the light of the glorified Son of God, the centre of the counsels of God, the Man of His right hand. Soon after this revelation Paul entered into the synagogue and preached that Jesus was the Son of God, and it is as such he presents the Lord Jesus at the introduction of his Gospel, written to the saints in Rome. The Gospel, Paul tells us in Romans 1:2, was promised by God in the holy Scriptures, and it concerned His Son, who was of the seed of David according to the flesh, but is declared the Son of God with power, by resurrection of the dead. As Son of God He is the Resurrection and the Life, Who can rise from the dead in His own right and title, and Who has power to raise from the dead, not only His saints, but all men. We have heard His life-giving voice, and we live in the life He has communicated to us. The truth of righteousness is brought out

by Paul as by no other servant of the Lord; in his Gospel the righteousness of God was proclaimed, God revealed it on the principle of faith, and whoever had faith in God was accounted righteous before Him. No man could stand before God in his own righteousness; the debased heathen did not think good to retain God in their knowledge, so God gave them up to all kinds of excesses, the natural result of their reprobate mind. The Gentile philosophers who condemned others were self-condemned, for they practised what they condemned in others: the Jew, who professed to know God, caused the name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles by his life of sin. Thus was all mankind brought in guilty before God, none good, and none righteous; but how wonderful the grace that provided a righteousness in which man could appear suitably attired for the presence of God. Like the prodigal, we can rejoice in the presence of God, arrayed in the best robe of His providing; like the guests called to the wedding, we can be there in the wedding garment worthy of Him Who has bidden us. Because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the rich grace of God can set us before the face of God, where none can bring a charge against us; faith lays hold of this divine righteousness, which gives us peace with God.

Paul's Gospel not only tells us that we have peace with God regarding our guilty past, but that in the present "we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ stands in the favour of God; we are before God where His face is towards us in blessing; and faith gives us to know the joy of this place. But what of the future? We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God! Once, as sinners, we came short of the glory of God — it was a standard that none could reach — but now we have the happy prospect of entering into the scene of the divine glory in the company of Jesus, just as Moses and Elias entered into the cloud with Him on the glory mount. Then we have in Paul's Gospel the truth of the love of God: a love expressed on the cross, when God gave His Son for sinners; a love which we now know in our hearts in the power of an indwelling Spirit. That love, entering into our hearts, has driven out all the enmity towards God that once was there: these two things, the consciousness of the love of God and enmity towards Him could not dwell together in our hearts: thus are we in right relations with God, we have been reconciled to Him through the death of His Son. Is it any wonder that we joy in God, after that He has done so much for us? He has justified us, brought us to stand in His favour, given us the prospect of His glory, given us to know His love in our hearts, given to us His Spirit, removed all our enmity against Him, saved us from wrath, and brought us into right relations with Himself. What a God! What hath God wrought! Not only has God blessed us through our Lord Jesus Christ, but He has blessed us in Him, and this is taught in the second part of Romans 5:1-21. By nature we were in Adam; now, by God's grace, we are in Christ. In Adam we have been constituted sinners, and shared in the judgment, condemnation and death that were the portion of his fallen race; but we are no longer in Adam, God has set us in Christ before His face, and in Him we have the free gift of righteousness in the grace of God, we are constituted righteous, and have the life of Christ in whom we have been justified, a life to which no condemnation could ever be attached. In Romans 6:1-23 we learn that in having been baptized unto Christ Jesus, we have been baptized unto His death: we have died with Christ, and have thus died to sin. Once we were the bondslaves of sin, but now we are to reckon ourselves dead unto sin, our old master, and alive to God for His service. What wonderful liberty is this! We look back to the time when sin controlled all our thoughts and actions, but now rejoice that we have a new master who has claims upon us because of His rich grace towards us, and we delight in His service. Under the dominion of sin, lawlessness and uncleanness constantly marked us; in the service of God we can bring forth fruit

for His pleasure, which issues in eternal life. In Romans 7:1-25 we learn that we are not under law; we have died from under the yoke of law in Christ's death. The law may be used of God to enable one in whom He has wrought to distinguish between the flesh in him and the work of God, but it is definitely stated in the previous chapter, "Ye are not under law but under grace." From Romans 8:1-39 we gather the blessedness of our part in Christ, for, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." How could there be condemnation for any in Christ? When we think of how Christ has glorified God, and of how God's satisfaction has been expressed in raising Him from the dead, it is not difficult to understand that there could not be condemnation for those who are associated with Christ in the wondrous grace of God. Moreover the life that is in Christ Jesus is my life, received by the Spirit, and in this life I have been delivered from the old life in which once I lived; a life of sin, marked by moral death, and which comes to a close in the article of death. The law could never produce what this divine life produces, for it was not in the flesh to do anything for God's will and pleasure. But God, in the cross, has condemned the evil principle of sin that works in the nature of man, and secures for His pleasure the righteous requirements of the law in those who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. A great deal about the Holy Spirit is brought before us in Paul's Gospel; there is a great deal in this chapter; there is much in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and there are many other mentions in his other writings. We are viewed here as being "according to the Spirit," and therefore are occupied with the things of the Spirit; we are not in the flesh "but in the Spirit," being indwelt by the Spirit of God. We have the Spirit as bringing us into relationship with God and with Christ, so that we have the nature of God and the character of Christ. The Spirit within us is life to enable us to be for the glory of God in all the details of life down here; and the Spirit is power to quicken our mortal bodies at Christ's coming. As led by the Spirit of God we are the sons of God, being within us a spirit of adoption, giving us the consciousness of the relationship of sons and children, and enabling us to address God as Father when we commune with Him.

Paul's Gospel then leads us in thought to the glory that is to be revealed to us, both within the Father's House, and in the public display of the kingdom. Passing through a groaning creation, we, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, know what it is to groan in sympathy with the groaning creature. Often we know not what to pray for, but by the Spirit within we groan in the presence of God. This groan would not be intelligible to any one who heard, but God can interpret the groan of His saints uttered in the Spirit. Then we have the calling and the purpose of God, and the wonderful prospect that is before us of being conformed to the image of God's Son that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. While awaiting this glorious consummation, how blessed to realise that "God (is) for us; that Christ makes intercession for us; that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, or from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Passing on to 1 Corinthians 15:51 we read, "Behold I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." This is one of the outstanding secrets of Paul's Gospel. How wonderful it is for us to pass through this world with the thought in our hearts that we may not pass through death, but that if Christ should come today we would be changed. In a moment this glorious transformation will be effected. The sleeping saints of God will be raised with bodies of glory, and our change will then take place, and death will be swallowed up in the triumph of that hour.

Coming to 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 we read of the ministry of Paul, and his fellow-labourer, Timothy. The saints at Corinth were the epistle of Christ, the fruit of their labours, but the work of the Spirit of God. Divine impressions of Christ had been written in the hearts of the saints by the Spirit of God as a result of the preaching and teaching of these devoted servants of the Lord. The ministry that wrought so effectually was Paul's Gospel, which is compared or contrasted in this chapter with the law. At Sinai the law was given, but it was a ministration of condemnation and of death. What Paul ministered was a ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness, which brought life to those who received it. The glory of the old covenant, that shone in the face of Moses, was to be done away, and it paled before the excellence of the new covenant glory that shines unveiled in the face of Jesus. This is the glory that we are privileged to behold: all the glory connected with that blessed One in Whom divine grace has been manifested; and occupied with Him, and with the glory that shines in Him, we become morally like Him in this world, while awaiting the time when we shall bear His image in heaven. In 2 Corinthians 4:2 Paul speaks of manifesting the truth. It is the privilege, and responsibility, of every servant of the Lord to manifest in his life the truth that he ministers; and it is the privilege of every saint of God to translate into the details of everyday life the truth that has come to us from God. Twice in the Epistle to the Romans Paul writes "My Gospel;" in 2 Corinthians 4:3 he speaks of "Our Gospel." The explanation is simple: in Romans, Paul writes as Minister of the Gospel, and does not associate any one with him in the address; here, in 2 Corinthians, he associates Timothy with him, and therefore says "Our Gospel." In opening 1 Corinthians, the Apostle had emphasised the truth of the cross of Christ; in 2 Corinthians he dwells on the glory of Christ. Paul's Gospel presents to us the Christ he saw on the way to Damascus, so that he unfolds "The glory of the Lord with unveiled face;" "The Gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God;" and "The knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Christ is the image of God as Man, the last Adam; the One Who is Head over all that God has given to Him, and Who shall be the centre of all as Son of Man in the day to come. But He is God's image in another way: in Colossians 1:1-29 He is seen as "The image of the invisible God," and this is because of the greatness of His Person as Son of the Father's love. God dwells in light unapproachable, Whom no man hath seen, nor can see; but all that God is in His nature, in His activities of grace, and in the counsels of His love, can be known in the Son, Who came to reveal God, and in Whom all that He is is now seen.

What comes out at the beginning of chapter 5 is closely connected with 1 Corinthians 15:1-58. Our bodies are viewed as an earthly tabernacle, the temporary abode of the Christian which may be destroyed by death. Should death come, the Christian becomes unclothed, he puts off the earthly tabernacle, and awaits in Christ's presence his eternal house, the glorified body. The normal desire of the Christian is not to be unclothed by death, but to be clothed at Christ's coming; the mortal body being swallowed up of life, instead of being destroyed by death. The unbeliever has not this hope; he can only look for death, which exposes his nakedness before God.

We then have the judgment-seat of Christ. In Romans 2:16 Paul had written, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my Gospel." He had also spoken of "The judgment-seat of God" in Romans 14:10. This is therefore one of the subjects connected with Paul's Gospel. All of us must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; to receive the things done in the body, good and bad. The unsaved have nothing good to receive; through grace there will be for us as Christians that which the grace of God has wrought through us during our sojourn in this

world. I sometimes liken the judgment-seat to the review after an examination, when the pupils receive back their papers with the remarks of the teacher, and the marks that have been awarded. The teacher is then able to show just where the pupils went wrong, and to praise what has been done well. At the judgment-seat of Christ we shall complete our education that is necessary for the kingdom. What has been judged here will not require to be judged there, although we shall no doubt have the Lord's mind on every detail of our lives. Often we have hesitated, not being quite certain which way to take; then we shall have the answer from Christ Himself. Every motive, every desire, every thought, every secret, every action, shall be gone into with Christ. How necessary for us and for the glory of God will that solemn hour be! It is unthinkable that we could enter into the rest and bliss of eternity, or into the glory of the kingdom, without the resolution of every exercise and every difficulty that has been raised in the complexity of earthly circumstances and conflicts. We shall be in our glorified bodies when we appear before Christ at His judgment-seat; and shall gladly say Amen! to all His estimates of our deeds. For the unsaved the judgment-seat will be the Great White Throne; that is why the Apostle speaks of "The terror of the Lord." Down here, for the unregenerate, death is The King of Terrors; but the terror of the Lord follows death. How this should stir us up to plead with men about the eternal destiny of their souls!

Paul was not only affected by the thought of the judgment-seat, but was constrained by the love of Christ to preach the Gospel, to beseech men to get right with God. He saw the end of all that belonged to man in the flesh, and realised that only what belonged to new creation would abide. As being "In Christ" we already belong to the order of things where all is new; and we are privileged to take account of ourselves in this way. The world refused the reconciliation offered in Christ, and cast out the Son of God, but God took the very occasion of the expression of man's enmity to work out on the cross the great thoughts of His heart for the blessing of men, which enabled Him to reconcile rebel sinners to Himself, and to bring them before His face as His righteousness in Christ, while awaiting the day of the display of His righteousness in the world to come. The rapture of the saints, brought before us in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18, is one of the special revelations of Paul's Gospel, and the wonderful climax to our life in this world. This is the only place in Scripture where the actual catching away of the saints is taught. We have it prefigured in the translation of Enoch and Elijah; it may be involved in the taking up to heaven of the Man Child in Revelation, and it is necessary to the true understanding of John 14:3 and other Scriptures. This is what we are daily looking for! It may be today! The blessed Lord is coming to take us out of the scene of our failure into the presence of His glory, and into the rest of the Father's House. Paul received this blessed revelation directly from the Lord Himself, and it was given to comfort our hearts while waiting to meet the Lord in the air.

These are some of the features of Paul's Gospel. They are given to us to mould our thoughts, and to regulate our lives, so that we might be here for God's glory and pleasure. Wm. C. Reid.

S. Paul's Ministry in Second Corinthians.

Paul's Ministry in Second Corinthians.

(Notes of an address.) When the Apostle Paul first came to Corinth, declaring the testimony of God, he determined not to know anything among them, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. Human wisdom ranked very high in the esteem of the Corinthians, and the Apostle judged that this should be met with the truth of the cross, which sets aside all man's vaunted wisdom. What could all the wisdom of this world avail poor sinners? Salvation could not be procured for men by the wise, the scribe or the disputer of this world; but the cross of Christ, which appeared so utterly weak to the Jew, and so foolish to the learned Gentile, was the means by which God secured His great salvation.

Speaking of this same testimony, in the second epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle says, "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who was preached among you by us — was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:19-20). So that, the Lord Jesus is not only presented to us as the crucified One, but as the One in Whom every promise of God is announced and secured for the glory of God.

What a wonderful ministry was given to Paul — a ministry that brought from heaven the knowledge of God in the Person of Christ. In ministering the Gospel, Paul and his fellow-labourers made manifest the heavenly savour of the knowledge of God wherever they went; and all who came under the influence of the word learned what Christ was to God. Whatever men might think of Christ, He was a sweet odour to God. To those who received Paul's testimony, it was like a life-giving odour from the realm of life; but to those who rejected it, it was as a deadly odour from the region of death. Bearing about such a message, the acceptance or rejection of which determined the eternal destiny of men, is it to be wondered at that Paul said, "Who is sufficient for these things?" In 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 we learn something of the character of this wonderful ministry. It was not like the Old Covenant, which was a ministry of condemnation and of death; it was a ministry of the Spirit, which brought righteousness and life to men; and I trust that every one present has received this New Covenant ministry with its righteousness and life, of which Paul and his companion Timothy were ministers. Paul speaks in this epistle of "Our Gospel;" in other epistles he calls it "My Gospel." It was the Gospel specially committed to the Apostle by the Lord, but as associating Timothy with himself in the writing of this epistle, he graciously speaks of "Our Gospel." Timothy was most intimately attached to Paul, and writing to him later the Apostle can say, "Thou hast been thoroughly acquainted with my doctrine" (2 Timothy 3:10); and it was what he had learned from Paul that Timothy no doubt preached.

Fundamentally, Paul's Gospel is that preached by the other apostles, but it had its own peculiar features and divine revelations. He received his call from the Son of God in heaven, and this gave character to his preaching. He did not receive what he preached from men or through men; he received it directly from the heavenly Christ, with His authority to make it known. In presenting his

Gospel to the Romans, Paul shows that it is according to what God had before promised by His prophets in the holy Scriptures; and in this epistle deals with the subjects of righteousness and deliverance; speaking in 2 Corinthians 8:1-24 of God's purpose and of Christ at the right hand of God. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 we have one of the special revelations of Paul's Gospel, where he says, "Behold I tell you a mystery: we shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed. . . ." Should the Lord come tonight, the dead in Christ would be raised from their graves in incorruptibility, and our bodies would be changed to conformity with His body of glory. Is that your prospect dear friend? What would happen to you if the Lord Jesus should come tonight? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved — not only from the consequences of your sins, but saved completely out of this world when that happy moment of which we have been speaking comes. Another of the special revelations of Paul's Gospel is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18, where Paul says, "This we say to you in the word of the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:15). We have then unfolded the truth of the rapture — the catching away of the saints to heaven by the Lord, so that they might later appear with Him in His glory. At the close of 2 Corinthians 3:1-18, the Apostle shows where His ministry leads us: it leads us to the Lord Jesus Christ in glory, for he says, "We all, looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face." The Christian passes through this world not only looking back to the cross, but looking up to see the glory that shines unveiled in Jesus' face. He is the great administrator into whose hands God has committed everything, and He is our Lord. We have come under His authority, and as we are subject to Him, through being occupied with Him in His glory, we become like Him morally. Have you ever noticed that a child, though taking its nature from its father or mother, largely takes its character from its mother; being mostly with her, and occupied with her. Thus dear friends, as we are occupied with the Lord in glory, we become like Him — we take character from Him. When Moses came from the presence of God his face shone, and the people could not look on his face. It is altogether different with Jesus: there is no veil on His face, and those who believe in Him are able to look upon His glory. What an occupation for us! At the commencement of 2 Corinthians 4:1-18 Paul says, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." 2 Corinthians 4:1. He feels that the trust of a ministry engaging men with such amazing heavenly things, and which had eternal issues and present results, could only be sustained by mercy from God. Moreover, those who minister the pure light of God, and speak of the glory of God, must live in consonance with what they minister. But there were some, of whom the Apostle speaks, who handled the word of God deceitfully, and whose lives were thoroughly inconsistent with the truth. In contrast, Paul endeavoured to manifest in his life the truth he ministered. We see this in its perfection in the Lord Jesus, Who said, I am "altogether that which I also say to you." He was the perfect expression of all that He spoke. This was the line pursued by Paul: he could not be perfect like his Master, but according to the divine grace ministered to him, his manner of life was to live in the light and power of the truth he made known in ministry. We may not all be privileged to minister the truth, but we can all hold the truth in love, and thus seek to manifest it. Paul did not endeavour to commend himself to every man's judgment or thoughts but to their consciences; living before them so that none could say his life was inconsistent with his word.

Returning to Paul's ministry, he says, "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." The light of the Gospel which brings to us the knowledge of God also exposes the lost condition of those who know not the Gospel; and if it is hidden from men, it is because Satan has blinded them; they are under his influence. But the Gospel has been sent to men "to open their eyes, that they may

turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18).

We have been speaking about the glory of the Lord: now the Apostle brings before us the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God. The Gospel of God's grace tells of the divine resources to meet the need of the sinner, but the Gospel of the glory of Christ sets before us the last Adam, Who is the image of God. The first man was made in God's image to represent Him on earth; but Christ is the perfect representation of God in heavenly glory. What God is, in His disposition towards men in righteous grace, is seen in the glory of Christ. But all that Man is for God, not only in relation to earthly things, but also in relation to what is heavenly, is displayed to the eye of faith in the glory of Christ. (The Son as the image of the invisible God, in Colossians 1:15 is somewhat different from what is brought out here. There we see God, Who dwells in unapproachable light, coming forth in the Person of the Son; seen as only He can be seen, in the Son of His love). In the preaching of the Gospel, Paul called upon men to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ: it was Christ he preached, not himself. True servants of the Lord serve the saints for Jesus' sake.

Another feature of Paul's Gospel engages us now: "For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts." He looks back to the time when the light broke in upon the darkness of the old creation, and shows that God is dispelling a greater darkness, a moral darkness, by sending His heavenly light into our hearts that sin had benighted. The light of Genesis 1:1-31 heralded the commencement of the divine operations to rescue the world from the darkness and chaos that ensued, revealing the power and wisdom of God; but the light shining in the face of Jesus Christ displays a divine glory of different character. It brings to us the knowledge of God's glory in relation to His rescuing men from the gross darkness and confusion introduced by sin, and manifests through redemption the resources of God's wisdom and power. How God's glory shines out in all that His grace has accomplished through the cross! In Christ glorified we learn what God is in the great love of His heart towards sinners, for in Him all the blessing of God, made available through His death, is presented to us in the Gospel. This wonderful heavenly light had shone into the hearts of those faithful servants of the Lord who came to Corinth with the testimony of God. The light that shone upon Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus had penetrated his dark heart, and had forever claimed him for the Lord, to minister the glad tidings that light brought to him. God's servants can only minister with power the truth that has entered their hearts and affected their own lives. Thus it was that Paul could speak with power of the light that revealed the nature and character of God outshining in grace and love. When God first called Paul to preach Jesus as the Son of God, He revealed His Son in him, even as we read in Galatians 1:15-16, "But when it pleased God — to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him."

We have seen that the light of the knowledge of the glory of God is connected with the results of the great work wrought out by the Lord Jesus on the cross for the blessing of men; but it also makes known the deep satisfaction of God in Him Who completed the work. The propitiation secured by the death of Christ abides in Him, where He is glorified, in all its eternal and infinite efficacy; and the testimony of this forms an integral part of the Gospel. God's glory in creation is very wonderful, for "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Psalms 19:1); but how surpassing wonderful is the knowledge of the glory of God as seen in His own blessed Son, Who secured His glory by His death upon the cross, and now sits at His right hand in heaven.

Such amazing knowledge is a treasure far surpassing anything in this world, and "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." Each believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, according to his measure, has the privilege of carrying through this world the priceless knowledge of God's glory. But Paul and Timothy were special vessels as having the testimony of these things committed to them in a peculiar way, and only through the supply of God's grace and mercy could the earthen vessels, which contained the divine treasure, be constantly sustained. They were the objects of Satan's malice and man's hatred, being persecuted and troubled wherever they went; but God allowed these things that the treasure in the vessels might shine out in testimony for the Lord. What did all the trouble accomplish? It broke down the vessels, and the light shone out! Why were these devoted men not distressed or destroyed in all their troubles and persecutions? Because God sustained the earthen vessels! They learned that the excellency of the power to sustain them was of God, not of themselves. A life of persecution with martyrdom for Christ ever staring them in the face, produced in Paul and Timothy the same features of beauty that came out in their Master. Satan and his dupes may have been the instruments, but God was behind it all, ordering the circumstances of His servants, to keep death ever before them, so that the meekness, gentleness, kindness and other sweet graces of the life of Jesus might be seen by all around. We know for ourselves the danger of settling down here if our circumstances are quiet and comfortable; but when God stirs up the nest, and we feel the thorns and the pangs of trouble, our thoughts are taken from what has engaged us to the things of Christ in heaven. When everything seems to be against us here; when we are the objects of human malice; troubles and persecution assailing; we can rest assured that God's object is to manifest in us, in our mortal flesh, the features of the heavenly life of Christ that will never pass away. When we come to the end of the chapter, the Apostle speaks of all the sufferings through which he passed for Christ, as light affliction, and as but for a moment. He seems to say "Come with me into the presence of Christ in glory, and we shall weigh all these things in the balances of the sanctuary." He places all the sufferings in one scale, and in the other the glory to be shared with Christ in the coming day; and thus enables us to realise why he can reckon all through which he passed as "light affliction." Long years had he suffered for Christ, to bring His word to those blest through the Gospel; but when he compares those years with the eternity in which he will inherit with Christ all that lies in the will and counsels of God for the saints, he sees it but to be a moment of time. When we consider the labours, persecutions, perils and other sufferings endured by Paul, as brought out in 2 Corinthians 11:1-33, we can form some little idea of how he was enlightened and controlled in his thoughts, feelings and judgments, by the unseen things in Christ in glory. The normal attitude of the Christian is to be engaged with things unseen; the eyes closed to the things of this world, and opened through faith, and in the Spirit's power, to the world where we can behold the glory of the Lord, the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God, and the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. If thus occupied with Christ in glory, we can reckon the present conflicts, trials and sorrows, through which God calls us to pass, as light afflictions. All the glory of this world is quickly passing, but the glory that shines in the face of Jesus abides; it is therefore blessed for us to be occupied with what is real and permanent.

What a wonderful ministry was committed to the Apostle Paul, and brought to us! We have touched but lightly on part of the ministry given to him. That ministry embraces a whole wealth of truth connected with the counsels of God, but the way into these things lies in the chapters we have considered and in allowing the light of Paul's Gospel to have its true place in our hearts.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Revelation and Inspiration

Revelation and Inspiration The distinction between revelation and inspiration is seen in David's last words (2 Samuel 23:1-39). In 2 Samuel 23:2 David said, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me". This is inspiration. God's word was in his tongue. Then David said in 2 Samuel 23:3, "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me". This is revelation, God revealing His mind to His servant. David was both the vessel of revelation and the instrument of inspiration.

Inspiration is not necessarily the conveyance of divine revelation. For example, we have by inspiration the very words that the rebellious Cain spoke to God, words of falsehood and insolence. The inspiration consists in the control of the instrument chosen by the Spirit of God in the communication of that which God desires to convey to His people. Because of this divine control we can rely on all that God has given to us in the Holy Scriptures.

There are divine revelations given by inspiration that the prophets, who were the Spirit's instruments, could not understand. The Apostle Peter, writing by inspiration, tells us this. It is not difficult for us to apprehend that Isaiah found it impossible to understand such parts of his writings as the last three verses of Isaiah 52:1-15, and Isaiah 53:1-12. These spake of the "sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:11). Nor could David enter into the meaning of Psalms 21:1-13, which spoke of the sufferings of the Son of God. It was the Spirit of Christ in David that gave utterance to these amazing prophecies. In 1 Corinthians 2:1-16 the Apostle Paul writes of things "which God ordained before the world unto our glory . . . things which God hath prepared for those that love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:7-9). Of these wonderful things Paul says, "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:10). Here is the truth of divine revelation regarding Christian blessings. Not only have these great blessings been revealed to us, but they have also been communicated to us by divine inspiration in the Holy Scriptures, even as the Apostle writes, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth" (1 Corinthians 2:13). Paul was the vessel to whom the divine revelations were given, and he was also the instrument chosen by the Holy Spirit to communicate the revelations by His inspiration.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Russia's Last Invasion

Russia's Last Invasion

Russia's [recent] invasion of Czechoslovakia brings to mind the prophecy of Ezekiel in which God foretold His people of the last invasion that will be made by that powerful and ravenous nation. Here are the opening words of the prophecy, "And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal" (Ezekiel 38:1-3). The leader of this great invasion is called Gog, which means "a mountain," and he is from the land of Magog, who was the second son of Japheth. He is also the ruler of Rosh, or Russia, being the prince of that land, whose present western capital is Meshech, or Moscow, and whose ancient eastern capital was Tubal, or Tobolsk. Ezekiel, God's prophet at the time of Israel's captivity, was to set his face against this adversary of God's people Israel, to prophesy his doom, but he was also to proclaim that the Lord God of Israel, the Almighty, was against him, and from His powerful hand there would be no escape. In self-will this powerful ruler would seek to crush the people of God, and to enrich himself with the spoils of war, but God will intervene in His government to draw him and his armies onward to the judgment He has prepared for them, even as it is written, "I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them thoroughly equipped, a great assemblage with targets and shields, all of them handling swords" (Ezekiel 38:4). Although doing his own will, Gog is nevertheless being drawn to the place of slaughter by God, just as an animal is taken with hooks in its jaws to the place of slaughter.

Allied with Russia in its final assault will be "Persia, Cush, and Phut . . . all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah from the uttermost north, and all his bands; many peoples with thee" (Ezekiel 38:5-6). Just as Russia used the surrounding Communist lands to assist in the assaulting of the small land of Czechoslovakia, so will it bring with it its allies, making an apparently invincible force to crush a very small country. Persia, Ethiopia and Libya, in joining with this great northern confederation, evidently hope to share the spoils of war.

Every kind of defensive and offensive weapon is with this immensely powerful group of armies, but what is all this great array of human power in the eyes of God? As if taunting the great foe of His people, God says to him, "Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself thou, and all thine assemblage that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them" (Ezekiel 38:7). Gog no doubt professed to be the guardian of his allies, for his own advantage; now he will have the opportunity to be their guard, but what can he do when confronted by the almighty power of the God of Israel? He cannot protect himself or his allies, for all their targets, shields and helmets will be of no avail when God intervenes on behalf of His people Israel. The time of this last invasion by Russia, its location, and the conditions prevailing in the land of Israel are given in these words, "After many days shalt thou be visited; at the end of years thou shalt come into the land brought back from the sword and gathered out of many peoples, upon the mountains of Israel which have

been a perpetual waste; but it is brought forth out from the peoples, and they shall all of them be dwelling in safety" (Ezekiel 38:8).

These words, "after many days . . . at the end of years," clearly speak of a time then future, and the words, "the land brought back from the sword" show that the time spoken of has not yet come, for even now the sword is very active in the land of Israel. Not until the Lord Jesus returns to the land to reign as the true David will the land be brought back from the sword. When the Lord comes back to this world, He will first of all reign as the warrior King, subduing all the foes of His people, before He reigns as the true Solomon, the Prince of Peace.

After the Lord returns, Israel will be "brought forth out from the peoples" of the world, according to the Lord's words in Matthew 24:31, the prophecy of Isaiah 11:11-12, and other Scriptures. The mountains and cities of Israel, which had been for centuries a perpetual waste, but will be fertile and inhabited when the Lord brings His people back, will be a temptation for the covetous eyes and heart of Gog which he cannot resist. Dwelling in safety, with no evident means of protection, Gog imagines this land which again flows with milk and honey, will be an easy prey for him with his powerful armies. In Ezekiel 38:9 the Lord says to Gog, "thou shalt ascend, thou shalt come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee." Left to themselves, Israel would be powerless against this invasion, with its raging and darkening influence, but Israel is not alone, for Messiah is with them, in their midst, having already come to deliver His people from the nations that had taken His beloved city (Zechariah 14:3-4), and He will be the shield of Israel and Jerusalem.

Centuries before Gog has being, the thoughts of his heart are exposed to us, for it is here recorded, "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: It shall even come to pass in that day that things shall come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: and thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will come to them that are in quiet, that dwell in safety, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to seize a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thy hand against the waste places that are now inhabited, and against a people gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land" (Ezekiel 38:10-12). To all outward appearances the land was without defence of any kind, and the people unsuspecting and unprepared, and Gog thought there was nothing to hinder him enriching himself from the wealth of a land that was rich through God's blessing, and with the gold and silver that those who had come back to the land had brought with them. Of old, when Israel left Egypt, they took with them "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment . . . and they spoiled the Egyptians" (Exodus 12:35-36); and it will be the same at the end, for "Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem: and the wealth of all the nations round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance" (Zechariah 14:14).

Gog is probably aware that all this wealth is in Israel, and it has excited his avarice. Others are also aware of the existence of all this wealth, and seem to have no doubt about Gog's intentions, for "Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?" (Ezekiel 38:13).

Other nations who were not in the great confederacy would gladly have joined in the spoiling of Israel, but were content to encourage Gog only with words, no doubt hoping that if success

crowned his efforts to do business with him. It may be that having known of the great defeat of the western nations, and of the nations around Israel, at the time of the Lord's intervention, the dread of Israel will be upon them, as it was on the nations of Canaan when Israel came out of Egypt (Joshua 2:9-10). The young lions of Ezekiel 38:13 were unwilling to attack Israel, but would no doubt gladly have rushed to share the spoil had Israel been defeated. In Ezekiel 38:14; Ezekiel 38:16 God speaks of "my people Israel," and Gog was to learn what Pharaoh, in his day, had to learn, that in assailing Israel he was challenging the God of Israel, for Israel were the beloved of God. If Gog, evilly disposed towards Israel, determined to come against them, the Lord said, "I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes" (Ezekiel 36:166). Instead of enriching himself at the expense of God's land, and God's people, Gog would be the means of displaying before the nations the glory of the God of Israel. From Ezekiel 38:17 we learn that Gog is viewed as the final Assyrian, the one of whom the prophets had spoken, for it would appear that the land occupied by the Assyrian will, at the end, be under the control of Russia. One of the prophecies referred to is that of Isaiah 14:24-25, "As I have purposed, it shall stand: to break the Assyrian in my land; and upon my mountains will I tread him under foot."

Instead of meeting a defenceless people, as he had vainly imagined, Gog will be confronted with the wrath of God, for, "saith the Lord Jehovah, my fury shall come up in my face; for in my jealousy, in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Verily in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel," and all creatures "shall shake" at His presence (Ezekiel 38:18-20). The Lord Himself is with His people, not now as the meek and lowly Jesus, but as King of kings, and Lord of lords, and when His anger is aroused, not only Gog, but the whole land shakes before Him.

Gog, unwittingly, had challenged the power of the Almighty, and the Lord answers his challenge, saying, "I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord Jehovah: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will enter into judgment with him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many peoples that are with him, overflowing rain and great hailstones, fire and brimstone. And I will magnify myself, and sanctify myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am Jehovah" (Ezekiel 38:21-23). As it was in Judges 7:22 and 1 Samuel 14:20, when every man's sword was against his fellow, so shall it be with the armies of Gog, and the destruction of these mighty forces will be completed with other divine instruments of judgment. When God intervened to deal with Pharaoh and his army, Israel did not require to lift a finger in their defence; so shall it be when God deals with the last invasion of the powerful Russian nation against His land and His people.

If Israel is defended, and Gog judged, the Name of the Lord is magnified, and He will be known as Jehovah among many nations. From Ezekiel 39:2 we learn that God, in His wisdom and mercy, leaves a sixth part of those who come against His land, to witness to what He had done. Moreover, He will "send a fire on Magog," the land from which Gog came, "and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles," whose armies had not been engaged in the conflicts of the last days, and who had not laid to heart the solemn lessons of the divine judgments on others (Ezekiel 39:6). The seven months required to bury the dead of Gog, and the seven years needed to burn the instruments of war, emphasise the dread character of the divine judgment on the great northern powers (Ezekiel 39:8-15). Israel and the nations are to learn from God's dealing with Gog that he

is jealous for His holy Name, and that having chastised His people for their sins, He will bless them in their own land, which He has given them (Ezekiel 39:21-29).

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Shouldst thou help the ungodly?

Shouldst thou help the ungodly?"

Jehoshaphat was one of the best kings that sat upon the throne of David, and it is written concerning him that "The Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim" (2 Chronicles 17:3). Then it is added, he "sought to the Lord God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel." Not content with seeking the Lord himself, the good king sent out princes and Levites, with the book of the law, to teach his people the right ways of the Lord (2 Chronicles 17:7-9). Moreover, "his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord," and "he took away the high places and groves out of Judah." Because of the king's piety, "the Lord established the kingdom in his hand." The king's subjects evidently valued their king, for they brought him presents, "and he had riches and honour in abundance."

Jehoshaphat and Ahab At the beginning of his reign, Jehoshaphat "strengthened himself against Israel," for he knew that there was little in common between him and the idolatrous king of Israel, Ahab. It is therefore very sad to read, "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab" (2 Chronicles 18:1). It would appear from this that the possession of riches and honour had proved a snare for Jehoshaphat, as it has been for so many, a danger of which the Lord warns in the parable of the sower, when He speaks of the "deceitfulness of riches" (Matthew 13:22). That the godly king of Judah should be associated with the ungodly and idolatrous king of Israel was very sad, especially as it involved the marriage of Jehoshaphat's son to the daughter of Ahab, a union that was to bring much sorrow to the house of David. This unholy alliance was formed, it would seem, about eight years before the death of Ahab. Scripture does not tell us whether the family of Jehoshaphat led him to his friendship with Ahab, or whether it was Jehoshaphat's friendship with Ahab that led to the marriage between Jehoram and Athalia, but the Lord held Jehoshaphat responsible; he ought to have controlled his house, and kept them, and himself, from association with the idolatrous house of Ahab.

Having become involved with Ahab's house, after some years Jehoshaphat "went down to Ahab to Samaria" (2 Chronicles 18:2), and Ahab made a great feast for his guest, "and for the people that he had with him." Had Ahab come to Jehoshaphat to seek the ways of the Lord it would have been a very different matter, but it was grievous in the sight of the Lord that one who had been faithful to Him should seek the company of a wicked and idolatrous man like Ahab. Those who went down with Jehoshaphat were also involved in this fellowship with the ungodly. We do not know whether the sheep and oxen that Ahab killed in abundance for the feast were offered first to Baal, but of this we may be certain, they were not sacrifices of peace offerings to Jehovah.

One false step leads to another. First there was the uniting of the two houses in marriage, then there was fellowship at Ahab's table, and this was followed by partnership in a conflict with which Jehoshaphat should have had nothing to do. Ahab took the occasion of Jehoshaphat being at his table to persuade him to go up with him to Ramoth-gilead, and Jehoshaphat put himself in an

entirely false position when he replied to Ahab, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war." Not content with putting himself in a false position, the king of Judah also put the people of God in a false position. There was a very great difference between Jehoshaphat and Ahab, as also between the people of Judah and Israel. It might have been protested that all were derived from their father Jacob, but Jehoshaphat was king over a people taught in the law of the Lord, and who served and worshipped Him in His temple in Jerusalem, whereas Ahab was a wicked king who led his people in idolatry, worshipping Baal, a false god. The godly sensibilities of Jehoshaphat had been sadly impaired by the company and feast of the ungodly.

Evidently Jehoshaphat's conscience troubled him somewhat, for after consenting to be associated with Ahab, the king of Judah desires to have the mind of Jehovah on the venture. Surely he should have sought the mind of the Lord before agreeing to go to Ramoth-gilead. To still the fears of Jehoshaphat, Ahab gathers his false prophets, who do not hesitate to speak falsely in God's Name, for they say. "Go up; for God will deliver it into the king's hand."

It is little wonder that Jehoshaphat was not satisfied with the words of Ahab's four hundred false prophets, for well the godly king knew that they were not speaking the word of Jehovah his God; so he asked Ahab, "Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah besides, that we may inquire of him?" Ahab's reply should have caused Jehoshaphat to withdraw from the venture. He said, "There is one man, by whom we may enquire of Jehovah: but I hate him; for he never prophesies good unto me, but always evil." What an exposure of Ahab this was! He hated God's servant, because the word of the Lord through Micaiah was always evil in his sight. When Micaiah comes, after some hesitation, he reveals the mind of the Lord, which tells that Ahab will be slain in the battle. Angered at the word of the Lord, Ahab reviles His servant, and sends him to prison to be afflicted. Poor Jehoshaphat has to be the witness of this, powerless to support the servant of his God, and unable to restrain the evil of the ungodly man who had seduced him into alliance with him. What a solemn warning for every servant of the Lord. If we get into associations with the men of this world, we shall be powerless to speak against their evil or to speak on behalf of the Lord. Truly the path of separation is the path of power, for in it we have the divine strength to testify for the Lord, and to witness against the evil of the world. In spite of all that the Lord had spoken through Micaiah, Jehoshaphat went with Ahab to battle, surely knowing that nothing good could come from it since God had determined to slay his wicked partner. Still, God was merciful to His erring servant, for when he was mistaken for the king of Israel, and surrounded by the enemy, "the Lord helped him; and God moved" them to depart from him (2 Chronicles 18:31). Ahab, who had thought to escape by disguising himself, fell in the battle as the Lord had spoken by His prophet.

It must have been a chastened Jehoshaphat that returned to Jerusalem, but the Lord had not finished with His wayward servant, for "Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord" (2 Chronicles 19:2). Yet, even in this hour of rebuke, God does not forget what Jehoshaphat was, in spite of his failure, for the prophet adds, "Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God."

Admonished by the Lord, and laying to heart what had been spoken by the prophet, Jehoshaphat brought forth fruit meet for repentance, for going out he brought back the people "unto the Lord God of their fathers." It is a solemn commentary on the lapse of the king that his people needed to be brought back to the Lord, for his association with Ahab had evidently encouraged them to get away from the God of Israel. Jehoshaphat's instructions to the judges in 2 Chronicles 19:5-11, and his prayer when the confederate forces of Moab, Ammon and Seir came against him (2 Chronicles 20:1-37), are proofs of the reality of the recovery of the king to Jehovah and His law.

Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah On the death of Ahab, his son Ahaziah sat upon the throne of Israel, but he only reigned for two years. Who would have thought that after all Jehoshaphat had seen and heard of Ahab, and after his rebuke from the Lord for helping the ungodly, he would again be found in association with the house of Ahab? Yet it was so, for it is recorded, "And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly" (2 Chronicles 20:35). And this was within the space of two years of his former lapse. It is evident that although Jehoshaphat had repented of his former evil, and been restored, he had not thoroughly judged himself before God for the unholy alliance. Like many more in this day, the king found it hard to apprehend that association with evil defiles. Whatever man may think. God has made it crystal clear in both the Old and New Testaments, that He views very seriously the association of His saints with the ungodly of this world. On this occasion the partnership was not for war, but for gold, as it is recorded in 1 Kings 22:48, "Jehoshaphat made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold." From 2 Chronicles 20:37 we learn of God's intervention. First, He sent His prophet Eliezer the son of Dodavah to reprove him with the words, "Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works." Then the Lord carried out His word, "and the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish."

How many saints of God since that day have fallen into a similar snare, even into some association with the world for the sake of gold. God took a very serious view of this good king's associations. There is no direct evidence that he took part in any religious observance with Ahab's house, but his association with him in war, and with his son in commerce, was evil in the sight of the Lord his God. From 1 Kings 22:1-53, it would seem that Jehoshaphat laid to heart the divine rebuke, and that between the visit of the prophet and the actual destruction of the ships he had repented of what he had done, for we read in 1 Kings 22:49, "Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not." Even if this was a subsequent proposal to the breaking of the ships, it seems clear that Jehoshaphat had laid to heart the divine reproof.

Jehoshaphat and Jehoram On the death of Ahaziah, another son of Ahab, Ahaziah's brother Jehoram came to the throne of Israel. He was not as bad as his father and mother, "for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin" (1 Kings 22:2-3). On account of following the sins of Jeroboam, the Lord says of Jehoram, "he wrought evil in the sight of the Lord."

How very sad it is therefore to find the good king Jehoshaphat once more getting entangled with the house of Ahab, for when Jehoram sent to him saying, "The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle?" he replied, "I will co up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses" (1 Kings 22:7). Jehoshaphat uses precisely

the same words he had spoken to Ahab, when Ahab asked him to go with him to Ramoth-gilead (1 Kings 22:4). Does not this show that this good man had not thoroughly bottomed his failure in associating with Ahab and his house?

It was indeed an unholy alliance, for not only is the king of Israel in it, but also the king of Edom, and the Edomites were the inveterate foes of God's people. Soon the expedition seemed to be doomed to failure through lack of water, so that the king of Israel said, "Alas! that the Lord hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab" (2 Kings 3:10). In this moment of great danger, Jehoshaphat seeks the help of the Lord, and his seeking is not in vain.

There was indeed a prophet of the Lord there, for God had His eye on His devoted servant even in his time of failure. When Elisha's name is mentioned, Jehoshaphat can say, "The word of the Lord is with him." What the Lord thought of the venture is learned from the words of Elisha to the king of Israel, "What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother . . . surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee" (2 Kings 3:11-14). Moreover, Elisha called for the service of a minstrel, to take him out of the atmosphere in which he was, so that he could get into the presence of the Lord to get His word. All this must have brought back to Jehoshaphat the evil of associating with the ungodly.

Results of Jehoshaphat's Associations

Sorrowful as it was for Jehoshaphat to be rebuked by the Lord for his associations with the ungodly, the results for his heirs were very much more serious. Athalia, who had married Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, was the daughter of Ahab, and probably the daughter of Jezebel, for she had her murderous instincts; and it was probably under her influence that Jehoram, when he strengthened himself in his kingdom, "slew all his brethren with the sword, and divers of the princes of Israel" (2 Chronicles 21:4). A writing from Elijah prophesied the doom of Jehoram, who "walked in the ways of the kings of Israel," and the government of God also overtook him, for the man who killed all his brethren had his own sons slain by the Arabians (2 Chronicles 22:1). The only son who escaped from the Arabian slaughter was Ahaziah, and he only reigned for one year, dying at the hands of Jehu while he was executing the judgment of God on the house of Ahab. On the death of her son Ahaziah, the murderous Athalia slew all the sons of Ahaziah, only Joash escaping her wicked hands, for Jehoshabeath the wife of Jehoiada rescued the young child. Can we doubt that behind all these attempts to blot out the house of David was the hand of Satan? And was not all this dreadful slaughter the direct or indirect result of Jehoshaphat joining affinity with Ahab?

God has very plainly marked His displeasure of the unholy alliance of Jehoram and Athalia, for in the genealogy of the line of David in Matthew 1:8, three generations of this marriage have been purposely omitted by the Spirit of God.

How very careful we should be regarding our associations. What trouble Jehoshaphat would have spared himself and his descendants if he had kept away from the idolatrous house of Ahab. We are warned by the Lord Himself, in Jehoshaphat's history, of the grave dangers attending helping "the ungodly," and loving "them that hate the Lord." Moreover, we have the plain injunctions of 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 to guide us, so that we might be separate from all evil to testify for the Lord,

and against the evil of a world that hates Him.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Sin's Challenge and God's Answer

Sin's Challenge and God's Answer

Part 1 In 1 John 3:8 it is written, "for the devil sinneth from the beginning", and this, with some Old Testament Scriptures, leaves us in no doubt that sin originated with Satan. Moreover, though Adam brought sin into the world, Satan was behind it, seducing Eve, and bringing upon man the righteous judgment of God. But God accepted the challenge of sin, and in Eden announced that He had in reserve One Who would crush the serpent's head, giving the death-blow to the originator of sin, and glorifying God in regard to every question that sin raised. In infinite wisdom God has taken the occasion of the introduction of sin into the world to deal with it in its entirety, and for ever, so that He could have new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness could dwell.

How much was involved in the entry of sin into Eden. Adam and his wife were at once conscious of their guilt, attempting to hide themselves from God among the trees of the garden. They were evidently aware that they had estranged themselves from God, Who is of holier eyes than to behold iniquity. There was also the entry into man's nature of the principle of sin, and the enmity and defilement that it brought. This principle of sin became the ruling principle of human society and of the world in which man sought to make himself happy without God.

"The Remission of Sins That Are Past"

God could have met man's sin with immediate judgment, both on man and on Satan. Without the knowledge of the cross we might well have wondered why He did not do so. Yet to have done so would have been a triumph for the enemy and defeat for God in the face of the universe. God waited in patience till the time came for intervening in the Person of His Son, and while He waited, in view of the cross, He was able to remit the sins of those who had faith in Him. In Romans 3:25 we are taught that God's forbearance was manifested in not taking vengeance upon sin, and His righteousness declared in the cross of Christ. Of old there were the types, such as the Passover, the sin offerings of the Day of Atonement, the Red Heifer and the live coal from the altar touching the lips of Isaiah. There were also many prophetic Scriptures, of which Isaiah 53:1-12 is an outstanding example, which tell of Him Who "was wounded for our transgressions . . . bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed". These teach plainly that God looked forward to the cross as the foundation for His remitting the sins of those who trusted in Him. The Forgiveness of Sins In Psalms 32:1-11 David speaks of the blessedness of the man whose "transgression is forgiven". He knew something of this when, on confessing his sin against the Lord, Nathan the prophet said to him, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (2 Samuel 12:13). But it was not until John the Baptist came that there was the preaching of "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins". This was in view of the coming of the Lord Jesus and of His impending work on the cross. When Jesus came He was able to say to one, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee", and to the poor sinner that washed His feet with tears, "Thy sins are forgiven" (Luke 5:20; Luke 7:48). Whether viewed as governmental or actual

forgiveness, the sins of men were forgiven in view of the cross. When the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, after glorifying God in regard to the whole question of sin, He said to His disciples, "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, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:44-47). In Acts 2:1-47 we read of the disciples carrying out the injunction of the Lord when they began their preaching at Jerusalem, announcing the forgiveness of sins "in the Name of Jesus Christ". The apostle John says, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His Name's sake" (1 John 2:12). Paul joins his testimony to that of the twelve apostles when he writes, "In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7).

Justification

It is one thing to remit a debt and forgive the debtor, but quite another to clear a man of his guilt. In human affairs it is impossible to clear a man who is evidently guilty; but what is impossible with men is possible with God. Not only does David speak of the forgiveness of sins in Psalms 32:1-11, but also of the blessedness of the man "unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity". But we have to wait until the Lord Jesus had died and risen again before we could actually know what it was to be righteously cleared from every charge of guilt. The publican, of whom the Lord Jesus spoke in Luke 18:1-43, "went down to his house justified", for he had done what was right in the sight of God, confessing himself to be a sinner and casting himself on the mercy of God. Abraham, many centuries earlier, "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness". From these cases we learn that faith in God and confession of Our sins will clear us from our sins in the sight of God, and we see how God is righteous in clearing us from every charge of guilt in the cross of Christ. The basis of remission of sins, forgiveness and justification is in the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us that, "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Paul tells the Ephesians that forgiveness is "through His blood . . . according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7) and to the Romans he writes, "being now justified by His blood . . ." (Romans 5:9).

God has been infinitely glorified by the death of His Son in regard to the questions that sin had raised, and His great love has been told out in that same death, even as it is written in 1 John 4:10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son the propitiation for our sins". In the cross there has not only been displayed the triumph of God over sin, but the manifestation of His perfect, infinite and eternal love. Love has triumphed over all the hatred manifested in the rejection of Jesus, and God's goodness against all the evil.

Sin is Covered The meaning of atonement is to cover, and David spoke of the blessedness of the man whose sin is covered. Nothing but the blood-shedding of a spotless victim of infinite worth could cover the countless sins of those whom God has forgiven. How wonderful that God Himself provided the spotless victim, at infinite cost to Himself, in the Son of His bosom. None but the Son of God could take away our sins from before the eye of God, but this He did when "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree . . . and once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that

He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18).

Although the word atonement is not found in the New Testament, the doctrine is certainly there, as in the above Scriptures in 1 Peter, and also in Romans 4:7 and in many others. On the Day of Atonement the goat that was slain signifies the truth of propitiation, while the goat, on whose head were confessed the sins of the children of Israel, and that was sent away, indicates the truth of substitution. Propitiation is the meeting of all the claims of God's throne in relation to sin which enables Him to forgive and justify guilty sinners. In 1 John 2:2 it is written, "And He is the propitiation for our sins", for all the efficacy of the work of redemption, wrought on the cross, abides in Him Who is our subsisting righteousness in the presence of God.

Sin in Man's Nature

We have already noticed that Adam's sin not only made him guilty of a serious offence against the commandment of God, but that sin entered into man's nature, an evil principle that defiled the springs of his moral being and manifested itself in deadly opposition to God and His will. The evil in man's nature was fully exposed by the presence on earth of the Son of God, and the cross of Christ is the evidence of its heinousness. Even before the cross the Son of God said, "They have both seen and hated both Me and My Father". Yet this evil was seen early in man's history, when Cain slew Abel because of his hatred of the righteousness manifested by his brother. Cain's insolent words to God indicated the hidden evil of his nature. As he could not harm God directly, he laid hands upon one in whom there was the life of God.

Man's nature, flesh, through sin became sinful flesh, and the ages during which man was under probation proved that the nature of man was incorrigible. Men vainly imagine that human nature can be improved by congenial environment, forgetting that it was in the perfect environment of Eden that man became a sinner. In whatever circumstances or conditions of life man has been, he has shown the dreadful evil of his heart. A Judas, who was for over three years in the company of the perfect Man, the Son of God, betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver. Having proved that human nature is beyond recovery, incorrigibly wicked, God has brought it to an end in judgment in the cross, even as it is written, "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (that is, by a sacrifice for sin), condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). The Defilement of Sin The sin that dwells in man's nature has defiled his every inward spring, but God has provided for our cleansing through the death of Christ and by His word. When the soldier pierced the side of Christ dead upon the cross, forthwith there came both blood and water. The precious blood of Christ is not only the basis of justification, peace and forgiveness; it also cleanses, for "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin". While the blood is the foundation of all, there is the water that morally purifies and separates us from the state of defilement that is ours as born of Adam. When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, He said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God". In the new birth we are cleansed from the state that belongs to man as "in the flesh" by the Spirit's application of the word within. Moreover, the Spirit of God also produces a new nature within us, that which is of God, and which cannot be defiled.

Moral cleansing is also required when sin has been allowed in our lives. God's provision for this is found in 1 John 1:9 : "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". No fresh application of the blood is required for this, but the

washing of water by the word. The Entry of Sin into the World

Adam's fall had very serious consequences not only for himself, but also for the whole human race, even as it is recorded in Romans 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned". How awful are the ravages of sin, all proceeding from the one sin of Adam and from the guilt of his fallen race. The violence, corruption and falsehood that permeate the world's system can all be traced to Adam's fall. The results of sin caused the Son of God to weep when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. And how great is the grief of God's heart for all that sin has brought into the world He created.

Adam's sin has involved all who are under his headship in judgment, condemnation and death. But God has brought before us a new Head, of whom Adam is a figure, and all in Christ are brought into the favour of God, being justified in Him, and receiving the life of the One in Whom they have been justified. All under Christ's Headship, all who believe in Him, will soon reign in life with Him in His kingdom. While waiting for the full blessings of eternal life, when they will be conformed to the image of God's Son, they are under the reign of divine grace established through the work of Christ on the cross. The Putting Away of Sin When sin entered into the world, the rest of God was broken. God will not rest until sin and all its dire effects are removed from before His face. To this end the Son of God came into the world saying, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work". John the Baptist witnessed to that which would be accomplished by the Son of God when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world". The sacrificial Lamb would lay the basis in death for the removal of sin from this world; and in the coming day He will remove the working of sin when He wields the sceptre of power over the world.

God, in His infinite wisdom, allowed Satan to tempt man and bring sin into the world; but in the very scene into which it was brought, God has dealt with it, in view of removing it from the whole universe. Every question that man's sin has raised has been resolved for the glory of God in the cross of Christ. Not only will the evidences and effects of sin be taken away, but sin as an active principle will be banished from the universe of God. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that, "once in the end of the world hath He (Christ) appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26). The cost to God and to His Son has been infinite, but the results are infinite and eternal. How wonderful and complete is God's triumph over sin, and its entry into the world, removing forever every blot that has stained His fair creation and every question that could be raised. Moreover, the cross, where God's righteous claims in relation to sin have all been met, enables God to introduce His new heavens and new earth where righteousness shall dwell. Righteousness never could have dwelt in that new creation scene had God not triumphed over sin in the cross of Christ. In the new creation scene there will be myriads of the redeemed to celebrate for all eternity the mighty triumph of God in dealing with the question of sin, for His own glory, and for the eternal blessing of those who once were sinners, but who have been redeemed to God by the precious blood of Christ.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Bitter Waters of Marah

The Bitter Waters of Marah The Song of Moses was not only delightful to the ear of God; it gave real pleasure to Israel to sing of the great deliverance that Jehovah had brought to them in delivering them from the hand and power of Pharaoh. But after three days in the wilderness without water, the people soon forgot what God had been to them as their unfailing resource, and when they came to Marah and found its waters were bitter, they murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? God was proving His people. Could they rely on Him, no matter what the circumstances and conditions of life through which they passed? Alas! instead of simply resting on the grace and faithfulness of God, they murmur. But they were not yet under law; they were under God's grace; so He does not chide them with their murmuring, but warns them, lest they should not listen to His voice or do what is right before Him. In Egypt, God had poured out His judgment upon Pharaoh and his people, providing the Passover lamb to shelter Israel's firstborn; at the Red Sea, the waters which had been piled up to prepare a way for His people, were used to destroy Pharaoh and his host. Here, at Marah, God's provision was at hand to make the bitter waters sweet: Jehovah showed Moses "a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." As Christians, God has not only sheltered us by the blood of "a Lamb without blemish and without spot"; He has also given us deliverance from Satan and the power of death through the death and resurrection of Christ for us. But, like Israel, we have to meet the bitter waters as we pass through the wilderness. Do we find only bitterness in the trials of the way, or have we proved the sweetness that the cross of Christ brings into the darkest hours of sorrow? The tree, or the wood, that Moses cast into the waters, brings Christ before us; and especially in relation to His death. When we realise that the love of God, and the love of Christ, have come to light in the death of Christ, the light of that love illumines the darkest circumstances through which we may be called upon to pass. The circumstances will be naturally bitter, but the realisation of the divine love, made known in the cross, will alter their character practically for us.

If we suffer the loss of a loved one in Christ through the home-call of the Lord, there is naturally the bitterness of parting with the one that is loved; but the sweetness of Christ's love in opening the way into His presence for the loved one, by His death, completely alters the character of the sorrow, for we "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." And there is also the sense of the Lord's love for us in passing through the sorrow, as for the one He has taken to be with Himself.

Sooner or later we have to learn that the dark shadow of death is cast over the fairest and brightest of earth's prospects; and that the sweetest of natural relationships and affections may bring to us the most bitter sorrow. It is then that the knowledge of Christ, and of His love made known in death, brings sweetness into the bitter circumstances of life. For the Apostle Paul, death was a daily experience, for he said, "I die daily." Again, he wrote to the Corinthians, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:10). We are not called upon to pass through the intense persecutions that were Paul's, but, like him, we can bring the death of Christ to bear upon all the circumstances of life so that we too may manifest the life of Jesus, and prove the sweetness of the

joys of that holy life while waiting for Him.

Another aspect of this is found in Galatians 2:20, where the Apostle views the world in relation to Christ's death. Before we knew Christ, the world was most attractive to us, providing all that the flesh desired for its gratification; but when we see the world exposed in its true character in Christ's death, it may be a bitter experience for us to realise that in fidelity to Christ we must say Farewell to the world and its things; but the same cross that exposes the world brings to us the sweetness of Christ's love, for, like Paul, we learn there "of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." So that the waters of Marah bring before us all that belongs to man after the flesh; all connected with the natural relationships of life, all that is earthly, and all that belongs to the world. What promises the sweetest of refreshment brings bitterness to the soul until we learn the truth of the cross, that Christ' death has severed "ties that bound us here," and that He is "our treasure in a brighter sphere."

Then it is blessed to see that immediately on leaving Marah, with its bitterness, and having learned the truth of God's provision for every circumstance, there is Elim, "where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees." There are waters which are not bitter; the wells of God's own providing which bring refreshment and joy to the soul, and where we can rest under the shade of the palm trees as we take our way to the rest of God.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Body of Christ

The Body of Christ. The whole mind and will of God for us is contained in the Scriptures, and if we are to be here for God's pleasure, we must "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." This will has been revealed regarding our individual path, and also for us as having part in the church of God. If our lives are not influenced by these great truths, we suffer spiritual loss, and there is commensurate lack in our testimony for the Lord. It is not enough to be enlightened by the truth: the truth must be held in love, attracting the heart to Christ, and controlling the life at the centre of the moral being. Should the heart not be affected by divine light, there will be spiritual decline, and the danger of the light within becoming darkness, with resulting opposition to the truth.

"Why persecutest thou me?"

One of the great truths to which we have alluded is that of the church as the body of Christ. Paul received from Christ the ministry of this, which accounts for the truth of the body being found in his writings only. The words uttered by the Lord to Saul, while on the road to Damascus, revealed that the persecuted saints were livingly united to Him in heaven; and this revelation contained the germ of the great truth that the saints on earth form the body of Christ.

Romans 12:1-21. — The epistle to the Romans unfolds the position and the blessings that are ours as individuals; and Romans 12:1-21 opens by showing that the great end for which God has blessed us is to have us intelligently serving Him with our bodies presented a living sacrifice. As separate from the world, and as transformed by the renewing of the mind, we are to prove in devoted service the blessed character of God's will. Having learned God's will for us in an individual way, God would teach us our corporate relationship to each other as members of "one body."

"One body in Christ," To understand the meaning of "One body in Christ." we must get hold of the truth of "In Christ" as taught in Romans 8:1-39. As "In Christ" there is no condemnation for the believer, he is not in the flesh; but he has the Spirit of Christ, and Christ is in him as his life. So that the one body is a living organism, formed by God, and composed of those who have been justified, and who have partaken of Christ's life and Spirit. The "one body" is analogous to the human body, inasmuch as there are different members with different offices. Every Christian has his own part and function as a member of the "one body;" and each functions in harmony with all for the benefit of the whole. Whether our office is prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling or showing mercy, it should be done in interdependence on the other members, as being mutual participators of the grace divinely communicated. No Christian who realises that we are "members one of another" would act in self-will or independently of his brethren, under the plea of being only responsible to the Lord in service.

1 Corinthians 12:1-31. — If Romans delineates our individual position as believers, 1st Corinthians gives our collective position and privileges as God's assembly. We have been called into the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and are the Temple of God. As come together in

assembly, the saints act for the Lord; and have the privilege of partaking of the Lord's Supper. There, the Spirit of God acts in the different members; and through the gifts ministers for the edifying of the church.

"Many Members, yet but one body." The unity of the body is thrice noticed in 1 Corinthians 12:12, and is also referred to in 1 Corinthians 12:13 and 1 Corinthians 12:20. Although there are many members "The body is one," which bespeaks unity in manifold action, and precludes any action by any member that would deny in practice this divine unity. That there is "one body" repudiates the idea of there being more than one Christian company. The church of God is not composed of a number of different religious organisations and independent societies: but is the living organism produced by the baptism of the Spirit, and in which every member has drunk of that Spirit. No other unity than this is recognised by God: therefore any religious company gathered on any other ground than that of the "one body" is not on the divine ground of the church of God. Consonant with this, in writing this epistle, Paul addressed it to "the church of God which is at Corinth," but also to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Because of the unity of the church, the instructions given to the church at Corinth were binding upon all Christians everywhere; and the disciplinary action undertaken there in the name of the Lord, by apostolic instruction, obliged all the gatherings of the saints to act in the light of it. But although the church is one, it is composed of many members; and their manifold function in the manifestation of the Spirit witnesses to the divine unity. Likewise, when the assembly is not convened, the divine unity of the body subsisting in the One Spirit is evinced in the care the members have one for another. Every member is necessary for the well-being of the body; and God has set the different members in their places according to His pleasure; therefore none should say "I am not of the body," because he does not consider his place important or conspicuous. There are also some who say, "I have no need of thee;" which leads to independent action and quenching of the Spirit. Clerisy is the result of some refusing to function in the place in which God has set them; and of others arrogating to themselves the functions of other members.

"No schism in the body." To function intelligently as members of the "one body" we must realise the varied character of the many members, and be content with the part that God, in His wisdom, has given us. Apparent usefulness is not the true valuation of a member's worth. Let the meaning of these words sink into the heart, "Those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary," and "God has given more abundant honour to that part which lacked." Some, who have been lightly esteemed by men, have been of the greatest use to the church. To understand the truth of the body, we must see that it is a divine conception and formation, and that "God hath tempered the body together — that there should be no schism in the body." Although we may have failed to act in the light of the body; we shall gain in the measure we do act upon it. Because of the great ruin of the church very many of the members are not available to us, and consequently we suffer; but if we walk in the light of the body with those who are available we shall prove that "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

"Ye are Christ's body." When God formed the first man and his wife He called their name Adam. Similarly, the church, taken from Christ in death, bears His Name: "So also is the Christ." It takes all the saints on earth to form "The body of Christ;" but the saints in any locality have the character of "Christ's body" (which is the true translation of 1 Corinthians 12:27). An illustration of this

frequently used, conveys the meaning: — A detachment of any regiment of soldiers, in any locality, bears the name and character of the regiment; but it takes the sum of all the detachments to complete the regiment. Being Christ's body, the saints have the privilege to manifest in their locality the dignity and character of the name they bear; and are responsible to act in the light of the "one body" towards saints everywhere. It cannot be sufficiently stressed, that no matter how great the church's ruin, two or three gathering to Christ's Name may walk in the light of the Christian position, as set forth here, and get the gain derived from the only unity that is divine. Any other ground of gathering than that of the "one body," is human organisation, which is at variance with the truth of God.

Colossians. — This epistle teaches that Christ is "The Head of the body, the assembly;" and reveals that the church is His body. The Corinthian assembly was Christ's body locally; but this Epistle speaks of the church universally as "His body." The Son of the Father's love, presented in many glories, is the "Head of the body;" and Paul, who valued the church, because of its preciousness to Christ, filled up "that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ" in his service for it. United to the Head, the body partakes of His life, with a view to manifesting the life of the Head in testimony here.

"The increase of God." The growth of the body depends on the nourishment supplied by the Head; and if there is to be divine increase in the assembly, the saints must have the spiritual condition spoken of as "Holding the Head." At Colosse, the brethren were evidently occupied with human philosophy and Judaism; and there was the grave danger of the assembly being governed by the worldly principles of human religion and earthly institutions. Any increase brought to the assembly by such means, is not the "increase of God;" and time shows its hindrance to spiritual prosperity, and the unrest and sorrow that it brings. To hold the Head, we must rely on Christ; drawing upon His supplies in communion with Him: allowing only His mind and will in all the affairs of His assembly. This divine supply is communicated from the Head through those members who facilitate the spiritual exercises of the saints, and who labour in binding them together. In the "one body," God has called us to peace, His own peace, which should rule in all our hearts.

Ephesians. — In Romans the truth of the "one body" gives weight to the exhortations connected with our service: in 1st Corinthians the light of "Christ's body" is to correct the disorder in the assembly: in Colossians, the truth of "His body" was given so that the saints might hold the Head: and in Ephesians the church is viewed as "The fulness of Him that filleth all in all," that the saints might enter into the greatness of their calling in Christ. This last aspect of the church embraces all the saints from Pentecost to the rapture; and brings out the church's place in God's counsels, as the vessel in which God's glory shall be displayed; and in which Christ's mind, will, and glory shall be expressed to the limits of the vast creation.

"Reconciled in one body" As regards God's counsels, the church is destined to be the fulness of Him that fills all in all; but in the ways of God, Jew and Gentile, who were estranged from Him, have been brought into right relations with Him as having part in the one body. God accomplished this reconciliation by the cross, where He made known His infinite love; and by giving those who received the knowledge of His love, this place of nearness in association with Christ. The one body is neither a body of Jews, nor a body of Gentiles; but it is a "joint-body" composed of believers of both Jews and Gentiles; where in new creation they share together, without

distinction, in all the blessings and privileges belonging to this glorious calling.

"Christ is the Head of the body."

"There is one body," heads the sevenfold statement of Christian unity given in 1 Corinthians 4:1-21; which further emphasises the unity of the church brought out so clearly in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. In order that the truth might be brought to all, the ascended Head of the church gave gifts unto men for "the edifying of the body of Christ." This ministry is to continue "till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." From Christ, the Head, as articulated with Him, there comes through the joints of supply that living nourishment, which through the functioning of each part of the body, produces growth in the divine nature. If we are to answer in a practical way to this truth, it must be held in love; and in result we shall correspond to the features of moral beauty that belong to our heavenly Head.

"We are members of His body." Being Christ's body, the church is part of Him, which makes it suitable to be united to Him. This was before Gods mind in forming Eve from Adam. In the same way, the church is bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh, and is therefore meet for union with Him. Each saint is a member of Christ's body, being united to Him in life by the Spirit of God, so that we may receive all that is necessary from the Head, for the maintenance of the place of dignity given to us by the grace of God. As having the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, we are enabled to enter intelligently into the wonders of God's counsels, which give the church the intimate and blessed place of "The body of Christ."

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Bride.

The Bride.

God has been graciously pleased to bring His saints into different relationships with Christ, His own dear Son, relationships which manifest the wonderful favour and blessings lavished upon men, and which unfold distinctive features of the divine grace and glory. The Lord Jesus speaks of His own as "My sheep." "My friends," and "My brethren;" and after His ascension the saints are viewed as His body and His bride. Israel's blessing, in the Millennium, will bring to God the joy of the bridegroom over the bride (Isaiah 62:5); and the nuptial joy of Christ over His earthly people is touchingly and charmingly described in the Song of Songs, but the portion of "The Bride, the Lamb's wife," with its closest intimacy, and deep, heavenly affection, has been reserved for the church.

Eve.

Lovely types of Christ and the church are found in the Old Testament Scriptures, giving some of the beautiful features belonging to Christ's Bride, or the traits distinguishing the saints who compose the Bride, the great prototype, Adam and Eve, being expressly mentioned in Ephesians 5:1-33. This precious picture of the blessed relationship of the church to Christ existed before the entrance of sin into the world, and before death's dark sentence cast its shadow upon fair Eden to mar its joys. Eve was formed to share with Adam the delights of a sinless, deathless paradise, where the man was head and centre, but where all was speedily and irrecoverably ruined by the fall. But the church will share with Christ the unbroken joys of the heavenly Paradise of God, where neither death nor sin can enter, and where, for eternity, she shall be Christ's blest companion, and the vessel in which the glory of God shall be displayed. When God said "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18). He not only disclosed His providential care for Adam, but let out what was in His mind and counsels for Christ and the church. God desired for His Son, the Man of His counsels, a counterpart, His like, one who could enter into His thoughts and feelings, and respond to His affections. The lower animals, God formed from the ground; but Adam's wife was derived from him: she was part of himself; she was built by God from Adam's rib, taken from him in his deep sleep. Similarly, while Christ slept in death, and during the time of His absence from this world, God has procured from Him and for Him, that which is of Himself, to be His companion. She belongs to Christ, yet is she the workmanship of God; and being bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, is suitable to be united to Him.

Rebekah and Leah.

Rebekah, the bride of Isaac, and Leah, the bride of Jacob, both belonged to the same country and to the same kindred as their husbands, a very express charge being given in each case that a daughter of Canaan must not be taken as wife (Genesis 24:3; Genesis 28:1). Thus also must the bride of the Lamb belong to His country and His kindred: she is not only heavenly in destiny, but

heavenly in origin — Jerusalem above is our Mother (Galatians 4:26); and we are not of the world, even as He is not of the world. Hebrews 2:11 shows that we are of His kindred.

If Rebekah and Leah have features in common they also have complementary features. Rebekah was united to him who prefigured the risen Christ (Genesis 22:12; Hebrews 11:19), but Leah was bride to one who foreshadowed Christ as a sufferer, who restored that which he took not away, who was consumed in unwearied toil, and who laboured while others slept (see Genesis 31:39-40; Luke 6:12). Rebekah was procured for Isaac, and brought to him to share in all his Father gave to him; but Jacob went for Leah and secured her at the cost of rigorous service, and she first shared with him the days of toil before having part with him in the wealth and glory which he acquired. Like Rebekah, the church leaves all connected with country and father's house here, to share all that the Father has given to the Son in His House and heavenly country: and like Leah, the church is called to share a path of toil and suffering before having her eternal portion with Christ, to share the wealth and glory acquired while absent from His Father's House. (Rachel typifies Israel, Christ's earthly bride. Jacob first sought Rachel, but received Leah: so Christ came first to Israel, but being rejected He first received the church. Leah, like the church, is the fruitful one; and after loved Rachel passes off the scene, like Israel after the Millennium, Leah remains as Jacob's companion in the land of promise.) Asenath and Zipporah. The brides of Joseph and Moses were the daughters of priests, they were both Gentiles, and both were given to their husbands while rejected by their brethren. Those who compose the church belong to a priestly family (1 Peter 2:5), they are "all of one" with Christ, and are therefore suited for His companionship. Although the church is composed of Jews and Gentiles, it is characteristically Gentile, in the sense that it is largely composed of Gentiles: even as we read, "God . . . did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His Name" (Acts 15:14); and again "Christ in you, (Gentiles) the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). That Christ has the church while rejected by His earthly brethren needs little emphasis. In this connection, it is interesting to observe that Stephen, in Acts 7:1-60, presents Joseph and Moses as types of the rejected Christ.

These brides have also complementary features: Asenath shares with Joseph his exaltation and glory, but Zipporah has part with Moses in his place of strangership and rejection. Moreover, Asenath is united to him who is raised from the lowest to the highest place in Egypt, but Zipporah is the wife of the one who forsook Egypt with its kingdom and glory; who chose the path of suffering and affliction. When on earth, Christ refused the kingdom from the Satan and from men, but He shall have it from the hand of His Father; then shall the church share His kingdom and glory.

Ruth, and Abigail. The brides of Boaz and his descendant David were both widows, women who had known bereavement and sorrow before finding happiness with their royal husbands. They were also women of distinctive grace: Ruth, a lovely character, marked by devotion and fidelity, of whom Boaz said "All the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman" (Ruth 3:11): and of Abigail the Scripture says, "She was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance" (1 Samuel 25:3). Abigail's action in preventing David from taking vengeance manifests her wisdom and judgment. Thus the church is composed of those who had a previous history in this world before being livingly united to Christ by the Holy Spirit, a history that came to an end by death, so that we should be married to another, even to Christ. Spite of all the failure of the church, there are manifested in the saints the beautiful features of Christ; and when the church

is seen in her linen garment, pure and bright, there will be set forth all that has given Him pleasure during her earthly sojourn. And it is to Him who is of the royal line that the church is united. Not only is Christ of David's line, according to the flesh, but He is God's King, the King of Kings, and Lord of lords. As to their complementary features; Ruth was a Moabitess, a stranger, whom the law excluded from the congregation of Israel (Deuteronomy 23:3), but in God's sovereign mercy and grace she was brought into divine blessing and favour. But Abigail was of Israel, and probably of the tribe of Judah. So that Ruth tells of those who were afar off but have been brought nigh, while Abigail again shows the bride as belonging to Christ's kindred and country. Ruth, who was poor, left her poverty to share the substance of the "mighty man of wealth;" but Abigail left the house of the man that "was very great" with his "three thousand sheep and a thousand goats," to share the rejection, poverty, and wanderings of David. While the church leaves her poverty in this world to have part in the glorious inheritance possessed "in Christ" (Ephesians 1:11), it is also her privilege to forsake this world with its proffered wealth and glory, so as to share Christ's outside place; not to be rich where He was poor.

"Christ also loved the Church." From the epistle to the Ephesians, which opens out the counsels of God, we learn that the church is to be Christ's companion in the coming ages. To give point and force to the practical exhortations for husbands and wives, the Spirit of God, in Ephesians 5:1-33, presents the relationship of the church to Christ, and His wonderful love for the church. This great love has been measured by the giving of Himself. The man of Matthew 13:1-58 sold all he had to obtain the treasure; and the merchantman impoverished himself to secure the pearl of great price; but Christ not only emptied Himself of the form of God and relinquished all connected with His earthly kingdom, but in love gave Himself. Christ's is a love which passeth knowledge; its measure and character expressed in His death. But Christ gave Himself, not only to procure the church, but to present it to Himself, "glorious, having no spot or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless." In Isaiah 49:5, Christ is "glorious in the eyes of the Lord," and He will have the church like Himself, even as Eve was "the like" of Adam. Nor will there be a trace of wilderness defilement upon the bride, nor mark of age; for Christ is at present engaged in purifying her "by the washing of water by the word." Having claimed her by His death, and prepared her in His present ministry, He will present her to Himself, perfectly suitable for His companionship and for the display of His glory.

"The Marriage of the Lamb."

After all Christ's care and preparation of the church, it is not surprising that the day of His espousals is celebrated with great joy and glory. In Revelation 19:7 it is written, "Let us rejoice and exult, and give Him glory; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." Revelation 18:1-24 is mainly occupied with the detailed destruction of the great world system: the introductory part of chapter 19 with acclaiming God's vengeance on the corrupt system of religion, which falsified before men the character of the bride of Christ, and arrayed herself in the glory of the world. The false bride seeking a great place in man's world usurped worldly power, which brought her destruction; but the true bride waited in patience for the heavenly acclamation "Hallelujah, for the Lord our God the Almighty has taken to Himself kingly power," and then she finds her place with Christ where He is honoured and glorified. If Christ has been preparing for this day, the church has also been engaged in preparing her garment. Through the long ages of the church's sojourn on earth, the saints have been weaving and ornamenting in

divine grace the shining garment composed of their righteousneses. This garment is not the fruit of brilliant oratory, nor is its texture spun from the fibre of human wisdom; but it is the result of communion with Christ; in acts, mostly hidden from human sight, but wrought in meekness and lowliness under Christ's eye. Much that has been forgotten, by those who have lived for Christ, will be found in that day, in the garment pure and bright.

"The Bride, the Lamb's Wife."

If, in Revelation 19:1-21, the church is viewed at the marriage of the Lamb in the garment of righteousneses; in Revelation 21:1-27 she is displaying the garment of glory that God has given her. Heaven is her home, God is her source, and glory her adorning. Like a heavenly luminary with radiating beams, in the effulgence of God's own glory, she appears like a most precious stone, as a crystal like jasper stone. She is characterised by holiness, for the church is "The holy city, Jerusalem;" and this is emphasised in the "wall, great and high." No evil can enter the divine centre, from which God will govern the world to come, and from which the light of His glory and knowledge will emanate, to enlighten and bless the nations of the earth. The glorious and glistening foundations of the city reveal that the administration of the millennium is founded upon the moral features and principles of God's own nature and character: the pure gold of the street tells that the heavenly saints will walk together in new creation glory, with nothing to impair the outshining of the scene. The gates, with their names, show that Israel has a special place in the world to come in connection with the heavenly administration. God dwells there, without a shrine, for every whit is holy; and its illumination is only from God's glory, which proceeds from Christ as the Lamb. It is the divine centre to which the tribute of the nations is brought: there the throne of God and the Lamb is, from which the river of God flows: and there the tree of life yields its precious fruits, and produces its healing leaves for the nations. In this blissful centre the servants of God serve Him in nearness, bearing His features; Himself beaming upon them, and they reigning for evermore.

"A Bride Adorned for her Husband." When the first heaven and the first earth passes away, a new heaven and a new earth will be brought into being. Then the church is seen as "The holy city, new Jerusalem." Although the church will display God's glory in the eternal day, which has now dawned, her adornment is not presented here as a display for others, but she is viewed in her beauty to the eye of Christ. Indeed, this almost suggests, that the display of the eternal state rather shows to those who have part in it, what the church is to the heart of Christ. She displayed His glory in the millennium to the nations, now she displays what she is to Him. But, in her God dwells with men. During the millennium He dwelt in the city, for it was every whit holy: now that there is a new earth, through the church He can dwell with men. Men are brought into blessed relationship with God, and He Himself shall remove every trace of the sorrow through which they have passed; and in the glorious rest, where God makes all things new, none of the things that have brought distress and sorrow to men will exist any more. To this wonderful inheritance, God has called us; but He has meanwhile left us here to be overcomers, before entering into our full heavenly portion.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Church at Ephesus

The Church at Ephesus

No. 1 No thoughtful reader of the Holy Scriptures can fail to observe the favoured place given to the church of Ephesus in the affections and ministry of the great apostle to the Gentiles. For three years Paul laboured there in the work of the Lord, and, in the epistle written to the saints at Ephesus, the Spirit of God communicated through the chosen vessel the most wonderful truths concerning God's purpose for the glory of Christ and the blessing of the church. The epistle was written from the prison at Rome, which manifests how great his care for the saints was; and when about to seal his testimony to Christ with his blood, Ephesus is still upon his heart, for in his second epistle to Timothy the apostle writes, "Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus" (Ephesians 4:12).

Paul's First Visit To Ephesus

Although the apostle Paul was specially called to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, he never lost sight of the peculiar place that God had given to Israel, His earthly people. Therefore, when he wrote to the saints in Rome, he said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16) In consonance with this testimony of God's ways, when Paul arrived at Ephesus, "He himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews" (Acts 18:19). The result of this first visit is the expression of the desire of the Jews to hear more of Paul's ministry. Having other exercises upon his heart, the apostle is not free to accede to their request, but promises, if the Lord will, to come back again.

Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus At Corinth, Paul had found two devoted saints with whom he dwelt and laboured, "Because he was of the same craft." When he moved on, Paul had his two friends with him, and when he felt unable to remain at Ephesus, he left them there. Aquila and Priscilla seem to have made their home at Ephesus, and along with the house of Onesiphorus remained faithful to the apostle until the end. During their eighteen months with the Lord's servant they had evidently learned much of the truth for, when Apollos came to Ephesus, "Aquila and Priscilla took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." This eloquent and fervent Jew of Alexandria, who was mighty in the Scriptures, spoke boldly in the synagogue of the things of the Lord as he knew them; but the Lord used two devoted and unpretentious saints at Ephesus to unfold to him truth that he had never before learned.

Paul's Second Visit to Ephesus When Paul returned to Ephesus, according to his promise, he found disciples who had been baptized with John's baptism, but who had not heard of the coming of the Holy Spirit. They were in the same position as Apollos when Aquila and Priscilla met him. When the more perfect teaching of Christianity was brought before them by Paul, they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and through the laying on of the apostle's hands they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. It may have been to this Paul referred when he wrote in Ephesians 1:13-14, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of

your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." This Scripture shows very clearly that what is sealed by the Holy Spirit is faith in Christ who died and rose again. Those who had only received John's baptism had not the full knowledge that brings salvation. This full knowledge does not mean a deep knowledge of the truth, but an elementary knowledge of what is fundamentally Christian, namely the truth that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). This is, Paul declares to the Corinthians, "The Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved" (1 Corinthians 15:1-2). It is not enough for a soul to believe that Jesus lived; that maybe the beginning, as was the case with John's disciples: God seals with His Spirit those who are saved, who have believed in a dead and risen Christ. The work of grace having been sealed in the twelve who believed Paul's Gospel, the apostle continued where he had left off on his first visit, by speaking in the synagogue, "Disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8). For three months the work went on in the synagogue, until the opposition compelled Paul to separate the disciples from what was characteristically Jewish. This was a decided break with Israel. It is the last time we read of the apostle being in a synagogue, although he was in the temple during his last visit to Jerusalem.

It was the apostle's custom until now to minister where there was a synagogue: not that he confined himself to speaking there, for he spoke at such places as Mars Hill, and by the riverside at Philippi. Nor did Paul confine his ministry to the Jew. His procedure is illustrated in Acts 13:1-52. On going forth with Barnabas, "At Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews" (Acts 13:5); at Antioch in Pisidia they "Went into the synagogue on the sabbath day and sat down," and at the invitation of the rulers of the synagogue, Paul preached. As a result of the preaching there was division, and because of the opposition the apostle said to the Jews, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).

Although the servants of the Lord turned to the Gentiles, there was as yet no formal break with the Jewish synagogue, for later, at Corinth, Paul "Reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and Greeks" (Acts 18:4). At Corinth, because of the opposition and blasphemy of the Jews, the apostle says, "From henceforth I will go to the Gentiles; and he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue" (Acts 18:7). At Ephesus, Paul not only left himself, he "Separated the disciples." This was the true place for the disciples of the Lord, "Outside the camp" (Hebrews 13:13) of the religion of man in the flesh. God was very gracious and long-suffering in the transitional period, bearing with the Jews until their opposition and blasphemy fully manifested that Judaism and Christianity were diametrically opposed. Later, when writing to the saints at Corinth, Paul shows the fellowships of Judaism, heathenism and the church of God are quite distinct from each other. (1 Corinthians 10:16-21; 1 Corinthians 10:32).

Having separated the disciples from the Jewish synagogue, Paul disputed daily "In the school of one Tyrannus, and this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." Ephesus held such a prominent position, and the work of the apostle became so well-known, that all Asia heard. How very

significant are these words, "All they which dwelt in Asia heard the word"; for towards the close of his faithful life of service to the Lord and His saints, Paul writes to his son Timothy, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me."

Accompanying the preached word were miracles of no ordinary kind, for from Paul's body "Were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." It may be that these are some of the "greater" works referred to by the Lord in John 14:12. How highly favoured was Ephesus, to hear for so long, and from such a gifted servant of the Lord, His precious truth, and to witness the effects of the mighty power of God. When God works, the enemy is watchful, and endeavouring to spoil what God is doing, yet his intervention is often to his own confusion. The magicians of Egypt sought to imitate the divine power displayed by Moses, only to be exposed when they failed to create life. Here, the Jewish exorcists "Took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the Name of the Lord Jesus." They had no living link with Jesus, and could only speak of Him as "Jesus whom Paul preacheth." They knew not for themselves the power of the Name of Jesus, and would profanely use that holy Name to call attention to themselves, only to be rebuked and exposed in shame. The intrusion of the sons of Sceva not only brought about their own discomfiture, but was turned by the Lord to His own glory, for the matter "was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the Name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." Many who believed unburdened their hearts in the confession of their deeds and of the Name of the Lord, and this citadel of Satan must have been shaken to its foundations when "Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all." Such was the triumph of the Gospel: "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed." The outcry of Demetrius and his fellows only attested to the rage of Satan at the despoiling of his goods.

Paul's Call to the Elders of Ephesus

Before the intervention of Demetrius, Paul had already purposed in his spirit to visit Macedonia, Achaia, Jerusalem and Rome (Acts 19:21); and after the uproar he started out on his journey. A plot of the Jews in Greece brings about a return through Macedonia, and probably within the year Paul is found once more in the region of Ephesus, but does not go there, as he desires to reach Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost. On reaching Miletus, about 25 miles distant, Paul sent for the elders of Ephesus.

Paul first of all recalls to the elders what had marked his life and disposition among them as a servant of the Lord. From the outset he had been marked by humility of mind, the mind that was in Christ Jesus, while passing through sorrow, trials and persecution. In public and in private, he had ministered the Word of God fearlessly. Firstly, he had testified both to Jews and Greeks, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Secondly, he desired to finish his course and the ministry confided to him, "to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." Thirdly he had been with them "preaching the kingdom of God." Fourthly, he was pure from the blood of all, for he had not shunned "to declare unto you all the counsel of God." How highly privileged the saints at Ephesus had been with such a ministry.

Then followed the apostolic warnings and exhortations. The elders were to take heed, not only to themselves, but to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers. Paul had seen the different attempts of the enemy to ruin the work of the Lord at Ephesus, and well knew

the watchful foe would seek by all means to destroy what had been wrought for God. As good shepherds, they were not only to watch over God's flock, but "to feed the church of God," which was so precious in His sight, for it had been purchased with the blood of His Own. Thus nourished with the Word of God, the saints would be able to stand against the enemy, for it is as the Word of God abides in us we are able to overcome the wicked one (1 John 2:14).

Paul's presence had been a safeguard to the saints; he could detect as others could not the working of the enemy. After his departure, "grievous wolves," no doubt in sheep's clothing, would enter in among the elders, and they would not spare the flock. As we look over the sad history of the church, we can plainly discern that Paul's prophecy was not only for Ephesus, but for the whole church of God. What devastation has been wrought among the saints of God through men who have professed to be leaders in the church, but who have been wolves, men without the divine nature, who were not of Christ's flock, who had never known the Father and the Son.

Another form of evil, the work of the enemy through the flesh in believers, would manifest itself in men who wanted to be leaders in the church. It was not Christ's glory, or the good of the saints, that was before such men, but rather themselves and their own interests. To achieve their selfish ends they would dishonour the Name of the Lord by speaking perverse things. Of such were Hymenaeus and Philetus, of whom the apostle wrote to Timothy in his second epistle, men who erred concerning the truth, who overthrew the faith of some. It was not God's holy Word they ministered; it was their own word and of it Paul wrote, "their word will eat as doth a canker" (2 Timothy 2:17-18). The grievous wolves and the selfish, erring leaders are still with us; and we need to be constantly on our guard against them. For three years Paul had warned the saints "night and day with tears," as he foresaw by the Spirit what ravages would take place in the church. Again he speaks of the great safeguard against the different evils, "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up." God is more than a match for anything the enemy may bring against us, and dependence on Him in constant watchfulness will preserve us. But we need to be fortified, built up with the word of His grace. If we rely on the word of men, we shall be led astray; if we feed on the Word of God's grace, we shall be able to resist every attack of the foe. With the word of God's grace for the present, and the hope of the inheritance before us, we can take our way through all the difficulties with confidence in God. Unlike the false servants, Paul had not coveted what belonged to others: he had laboured with his own hands, providing not only for his own needs but for the needs of others also. He had not only preached what they should do; he had given them an example, bringing before them what the Lord Jesus had Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." How highly favoured Ephesus was in having the ministry, care and example of such a devoted servant of the Lord.

No. 2

We have already noticed the high privilege of the church at Ephesus in having the labours of the beloved apostle Paul for three long years, during which time he ministered to them the truth of the Gospel and the kingdom of God, unfolded the counsel of God, cared for them in every way, and gave them an example in his disposition, walk and ways. Even after his labours among them, his interest in them was unabated, as was shown in his talk with the elders of Ephesus, when he recalled his time with them, warned them of impending dangers, gave them his godly counsel, and kneeled down and prayed with them.

Paul's Charge to Timothy at Ephesus The first epistle to Timothy is introduced, so far as its substance is concerned, with the words, "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:3). At Ephesus, where Paul had laboured so long, the enemy was very busy seeking to undermine the truth ministered by the apostle. Fables and endless genealogies might do for the heathen and for Jews who had forsaken the Word of God, but were utterly worthless to those who had received the precious truth of the Gospel and counsels of God. What proceeds from the natural mind will foster questionings, but can never help on the dispensation of God which is in faith.

If Timothy had been left at Ephesus to hold in check the introduction of false teaching, he was also there for the maintenance of the true; and the character of the teaching will always be evident in its practical results. The teaching of Christianity, when received into the heart, will enable those who have received it to "love out of a pure heart," to walk with "a good conscience and unfeigned faith." The manifestation of love is the evidence of the possession of the divine nature. Love is to be shown to all in the family of God, and in divine compassion to those who as yet have not known love. A pure heart can only be found in one who has purified his soul "by obedience to the truth" (1 Peter 1:22); and who lives before God in self-judgment and in holiness. Only as we learn love in Christ in whom it was perfectly manifested, and only as we live in communion with Him, can there be this love out of a pure heart. But we cannot be in communion with Christ without a good conscience, and so far as the Christian is concerned it means that the heart is to be exercised before God in the light of His word. Saul of Tarsus could persecute the church with a good conscience, thinking he was rendering service to God; but it was very different when the light of the glorified Christ shone upon him, enlightening him as to who He was, and exposing the evil nature of his course. To have a good conscience the Christian must walk before God in the light of His word, testing all his motives and actions by the word. Without this there is ever the danger of getting astray, and making "shipwreck as to faith," like Hymenaeus and Alexander. In the second epistle to Timothy, Paul could speak of serving God from his "forefathers with pure conscience" (2 Timothy 1:3); but it was not until the Lord met him that he had faith in Him. Timothy, however, was marked by "unfeigned faith," which was first in his grandmother, then in his mother (2 Timothy 1:5). As a Jewess, his mother would not have "a good conscience," as, contrary to the law, she had married a Greek. All around us today there is the pretension to faith, but God will have reality in unfeigned faith. True faith enables us to see Jesus in the glory of God, and to walk down here in the light of that glory. The Epistle to the Ephesians

Although there were some at Ephesus seeking to lead the saints astray, and probably some who had made shipwreck as to faith; when Paul wrote his epistle to them, he could address them as "saints and faithful in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:1). The saints as a whole were living in the light of the truth the apostle had ministered to them. Because of this, Paul was free to unfold in this epistle the elevated truths relating to the purpose and counsels of God. It is not a corrective epistle, as so many are; it is an exposition of the truth given to him as minister of the mystery of Christ. The Lord caused the apostle to be set free from his arduous labours that he might use him to write this epistle. True, he was not free from suffering and affliction, for he was a prisoner at Rome for Christ's sake; but these very circumstances were the best suited for the writing of such a letter. All that the apostle was passing through in no way hindered this remarkable unfolding of the thoughts of God with regard to what He purposed in Himself for the glory of Christ, and what He

purposed in Christ for the blessing of those He in grace associated with Christ in richest blessing.

Paul's heart was free to disclose the wonderful secrets that had been made known to him by divine revelation. He was not hindered by requiring to correct anything doctrinal, moral or ecclesiastical, as when writing to the Corinthians. Nor was there any danger of the foundations of the Gospel being assailed at Ephesus as at Galatia, or of the philosophy of man intruding as at Colosse. Although the Thessalonian saints were going on brightly, they had not been instructed in the truth of the Lord's coming; they had not matured in the truth; they were not yet able to receive the strong meat that was given to the saints at Ephesus in this epistle. When Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, he expounded the truth of the Gospel, as minister of the Gospel, to saints he had not yet ministered to or met, even although he was apostle to them as to other Gentiles; but in writing this exposition on the exalted theme of the eternal purpose of God, he was writing to saints well-known, to whom he had ministered for three long years the wide range of divine truth, and who had matured in the things of God. If the saints at Ephesus were highly privileged in having the personal ministry of the apostle to the Gentiles for so long, how greatly was their privilege enhanced with this unfolding of the deep things of God. In writing to the saints at Rome, Paul had mentioned at the close "the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery" (Romans 16:25), but he could not at that time unfold the details of the precious truths mentioned. When writing to the Corinthians he could speak of "Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man's heart, which God has prepared for them that love Him, and which God has revealed to us by His Spirit." But it was not to the Corinthians these truths were opened out: they were carnal, not spiritual; they were not in the state of heart in which these truths could benefit them. It was to the saints at Ephesus that Paul ministered these great truths that he but mentioned to the saints at Rome and Corinth.

These precious truths were revealed to the saints at Ephesus that they might enter into the divine wisdom contained in them, and walk worthy of the calling wherewith they were called. God will have a practical answer in the lives of the saints to all He makes known to them, and this can only be when Christ dwells by faith in their hearts, and when the light of heaven is brought into all the details of our daily life. Moreover, God would have us stand in conflict for the truth He has given to us, and for this He has provided a divine panoply in which we can not only resist all the efforts of the enemy, but also with the sword of the Spirit and prayer prove completely victorious. In the Epistle to the Ephesians we have the very top-stone of divine revelation, bringing out as it does the secrets of the heart of God that were hidden from eternity; and this was given to the Ephesians, not for themselves alone, but with the whole church in view. What belongs to Ephesus is what God has given to all His saints, so that we might be here in the light of all His will, and walking for His pleasure and glory.

"Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus" The sending of Tychicus to Ephesus just before his martyrdom manifested how deeply the apostle cared for the saints there. Ephesus had been the scene of arduous labour and fierce conflict, even as he writes to the saints at Corinth, "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus," and "I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost, for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Corinthians 15:32; 1 Corinthians 16:8-9).

There was doubtless much joy in the apostle's heart in seeing so much fruit for his labour at Ephesus, but among them he had served the Lord "with many tears," and during his three years stay had "ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:19; Acts 20:31). How much sorrow had been brought to his heart by the opposition of the adversaries and with the prospect of the scattering of the grievous wolves and the men speaking perverse things. It was not without sorrow of heart he had besought Timothy to remain at Ephesus to "charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:3).

Great as were all these sorrows, they would not compare with the depth of the sorrow with which Paul wrote to Timothy in his second epistle, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 Timothy 1:15). Ephesus had been the centre of his work for the Lord in Asia, and the saints there were the crown of his labours. Now they have turned away from the one who had been Christ's instrument for their rich and eternal blessing, and who had spent himself, and been imprisoned for their sakes. Was there not in this the evidence of a departure in heart from Christ Himself? Was it not an indication that Christ was not dwelling in their hearts by faith?

If such as Phygellus and Hermogenes had turned away from him, Onesiphorus had remained faithful, and this brought to Paul's remembrance what he had done at Rome in seeking him out, and what he had done in Ephesus before. Ephesus had no doubt its faithful remnant, standing with him and with the house of Onesiphorus, and from them Tychicus would be sure of a hearty reception as the representative of God's devoted servant and apostle. If Paul had not the same place in their hearts, they still had the same place in his, and the sending of Tychicus is the proof of his great interest in them until the end.

Thou hast left thy first love No instructed Christian will doubt that the addresses to the seven churches give from Christ the prophetic history of the church from the days when it leaves its first love until it is rejected by Christ in its lifeless profession, and spued out of His mouth. This history begins with Ephesus, not in the state indicated by the apostle when he writes his epistle to them, as "faithful in Christ Jesus," but after Paul had left this world. The apostle had felt the departure, which was evinced in their turning away from him; now the Lord lays His finger on the cause of the departure, they had left their first love.

There was still much at Ephesus the Lord could commend, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience"; but, as has been often noticed, these are not spoken of as in 1 Thessalonians, where Paul remembers without ceasing their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:3). The springs of action are absent in Ephesus, and because they had left their first love. Such it was with the church at the beginning, and so it has been with many an individual and local assembly since that time. In tracing God's dealings with Ephesus in Scripture we cannot but see the peculiar place it has, setting before us the working of God in grace, and the precious privileges that belong to the church which has been so richly blessed, and which has been left in this world to be the vessel for the display to "principalities and powers in heavenly places" of the manifold wisdom of God. There can be no failure in regard to what God has purposed, but on the responsible side, how feeble has been the answer to all that God has ministered to us in the riches of His grace.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Closing Testimony of the Son of God

The Closing Testimony of the Son of God John 12:1-50. This chapter opens by showing us the Son of God in relation to three different companies, those who are nearest to Him, His own disciples; then His earthly people Israel; and lastly, the Gentiles. In the loved circle of His own, picturing the assembly, Martha, in single-eyed devotedness serves her Lord; Lazarus, raised from the dead, is in communion with Him to whom he owes his life, while Mary, anointing the feet of Jesus with precious ointment, worships Him whom she has learned as the Resurrection and the Life. Like the favoured circle of Bethany, we are privileged to be in communion with the Lord, and to serve and worship Him while He is in our midst. On His coming into Jerusalem the multitude take branches of palm trees and go forth to meet Him, crying, "Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the Name of the Lord." Though so near to the time of His crucifixion, the triumphal entry of the Lord into Jerusalem is a lovely foreshadowing of the time when He will take His kingly power and reign over the house of Israel. For a few short hours the Lord has His rightful place as the King of Israel in the midst of His earthly people.

Just at the time when, for the moment, Jesus is acclaimed by the multitudes of Israel as their rightful King, the Greeks who had come to the feast ask Philip, "Sir we would see Jesus." Here too there is a picture of the coming day when the Gentiles will acknowledge the King of Israel, and desire to see Him. Although Israel's King, Jesus as Son of Man will have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Heaven and earth will come under the sway of the Son of Man, as prophesied in Psalms 8:1-9 and interpreted for us in Hebrews 2:1-18.

Before Jesus could bring all the blessing indicated to the different circles, the Son of Man had to enter into death. He had not only to be glorified at God's right hand in heaven, but also on the cross (John 13:31). The corn of wheat had to fall into the ground and die, or else abide alone. To communicate His life to those who were to be associated with Him beyond the reach of death, the Son of God must die. The coming day will display the greatness of the harvest, the much fruit, that has come from that wondrous death.

Death was a dread reality to the Son of God, and its anticipation brought deep trouble to His soul. His entering death was a voluntary act, yet an act of obedience, but it would bring to Him the deepest sorrows in the forsaking of God. But the thought that controlled all His desires and actions was the Father's glory, and of this He spoke to the Father. The answer of the Father is immediate, "I have both glorified, and will glorify again." In the resurrection of Lazarus the Father's Name had been glorified by the Son; the Father would glorify His Name again in the resurrection of the Son.

What the Death of the Son Involved The closing testimony of the Son commences with the words, "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes." Just as the Son was about to begin His public testimony, the Father's voice had been heard proclaiming His pleasure in Him; now, as His testimony is about to close, the Father's voice is heard again. But the Jews had not an ear to hear or understand the Father's voice; they had refused the Son's testimony to the Father, and were unable to discern the Father's testimony to the Son.

If the Son was about to glorify the Father in His death, the world, as refusing and crucifying the Son of God, would seal its judgment. God had lingered over the world, giving it every opportunity to turn from its evil course, and last of all sending His Son to "reconcile the world" to Himself. Its treatment of His Son manifested most clearly that it was impossible to reconcile the world to God, and God, in the cross, has judged this evil world.

Leading the world in its deadly opposition to God was Satan, the god of this world, which the world had also accepted as its prince. Satan must have thought his victory was complete when he used man as his instrument to cast the Son of God out of this world. But this very act was used of God for the complete overthrow of Satan, and it will end in his being cast out. Very soon he will be sealed in the bottomless pit for a thousand years, and after a little season, cast into the lake of fire for ever and ever.

Lifted up in death, between the heavens and the earth, a spectacle for the whole universe that He created, the Son of Man will be God's gathering centre, to draw to Himself those who shall share His mighty triumph in His kingdom and glory. In that glory, the Son of Man will be the great administrator of the universe of God, and all will be brought to His feet to own that He is Lord. The people around had "heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever," but they could not understand the lifting up of the Son of Man or who He was. The refusal of the testimony of the Son had blinded their minds to the Scriptures concerning Him. The Light About to Depart At the beginning of John's Gospel it is written, "That was the true Light, which coming into the world is light for every man" (John 1:9). In John 9:5 the Lord had said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world," thereby indicating that He would not always be here. Now, in John 12:35, He tells them plainly that His time was short, "Yet a little while is the light with you." In this chapter the Lord speaks His final words in testimony, and in the next chapter it is written, "He (Judas) . . . went immediately out: and it was night" (John 13:30). The thick darkness settled down upon this world, unbroken for it until "The Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings" (Malachi 4:2).

How awful is the condition of those in the darkness; "he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." Such is the condition of man without the knowledge of God as found in Jesus. There is not a ray of divine light outside of Christ, nothing in the philosophy or religion of man to guide man aright in this world or to lead him to God and to the eternal life that is in His Son. As still with them, the Lord graciously exhorts, "While ye have the Light, believe in the Light, that ye may be the children of Light." For the world, all was over; it had been fully tested, and its judgment was sealed in the rejection of God's Son; but there was grace for the individual that believed in Him. Although the Light has departed from this world, John tells us in his First Epistle, "The darkness is passing, and the true Light now shineth" (John 2:8). The true Light now shines in the presence of God in heaven, and those who believe in Him are the "children of Light." The Testimony of Isaiah The Spirit of God breaks into the closing testimony of the Son to tell us what He had caused Isaiah to write so long ago. Israel was without excuse, for the Son of God had done many miracles, signs that made crystal clear the source of His testimony and who He was. Isaiah had written, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" The prophet foresaw, by the Spirit, that the testimony of the Lord would be refused by the nation, and that only a remnant would accept it. Christ, "The Arm of the Lord," the One with the divine power that wrought the great signs of the opening of the eyes of the man born blind, and raising Lazarus from death

and corruption, was unknown by all saving those whose eyes God in grace had opened.

Having refused the testimony of the Son, in His Person, His words and His works, there was no more hope for Israel. God had now intervened judicially in hardening their hearts and blinding their eyes. They had been as obdurate as Pharaoh when he had seen the signs of God in Egypt, and persisting in their refusal to hear God's words, like Pharaoh, they became the subjects of judicial hardening. Isaiah had seen the glory of the Lord, and wondered at the nation's refusal of Messiah, and testified to the righteousness of God's judgment on them. The commentary of the Spirit of God on the chief rulers who believed on Jesus is a solemn one, "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." They were like those in John 2:23 who believed in His Name when they saw the miracles of Jesus, but knowing all men, Jesus did not commit Himself to them. And they were like the disciples of John 6:1-71, who not liking to hear that He would die, "went back, and walked no more with Him." Refusing to be associated with a rejected Christ by the confession of His Name, they would not behold the glory of the Lord in His place on high, as had Isaiah. The Closing Words His last words to the world are concerning the Father, the source and subject of the testimony of the Son. To believe on the Son was to believe on the Father, for the Father was seen in the Person of the Son. Again, and for the last time, the Lord speaks of the light, saying, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." By nature man is in darkness, and he walks in the darkness without the knowledge of God; but the believer walks in the light of the revelation of God, and so does not abide in darkness.

Then the Lord speaks of the judgment of those who heard His words and did not believe. The mission of the Son on earth was not to judge the world, but to bring salvation. We see this when the woman taken in sin was brought to Jesus. He did not condemn her, it was not His mission, but He said to her, "Go, and sin no more." His grace was manifested in refusing to condemn the sinner condemned by the law of Moses; but the word which He spoke would judge, in the coming day, those who had rejected the grace of God made known in the Son. How very solemn it was that the One who brought the grace of the Father should be rejected by the world, and His words refused.

Never did the Son claim to be the source of His testimony; and for the last time He tells men that He did not speak from Himself; He came as sent from the Father, and spoke by commandment from the Father. The substance, details, and the very words that He spoke to convey His Father's message, were the Father's. If those who refused His words brought judgment upon themselves, those who received them received life eternal. The words of the Son expressed what He was in Himself, the Eternal Life; and they were eternal life for those who accepted them by believing on the Son.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Death of the Righteous

The Death of the Righteous

Balaam, though a false prophet, was used of God to speak many wonderful things, for God did not allow him to speak what was in his heart. There can be no doubt that he was attracted by the reward of Balak, which Jude tells us he "ran greedily after," and to obtain this he was quite willing to curse God's people, but God put a word into his mouth which he was compelled to speak. The king of Moab had said to him, "Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel," but he is compelled to say, "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?" Then he saw Israel from the top of the rocks, and said, "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the fourth part of Israel?" (Numbers 23:7-10).

Like their father Jacob, the nation of Israel had been chosen and blessed of God, and in spite of all they were naturally, God watched over them, and preserved them from the evil that their enemies thought to do them. After thus proclaiming the impossibility of bringing evil upon God's people, Balaam says, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his" (Numbers 23:10). In Jacob we see very blessedly set forth the death of the righteous, even as recorded in Hebrews 11:21, "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." This was the beautiful end of Jacob's earthly sojourn. The blessing of the sons of Joseph was not according to nature, but in the light of God's calling and purpose; and in spite of his great love for Joseph, Jacob refused to accede to his request, but put his right hand upon the younger instead of upon the elder. How blessed it is when a dying man is concerned with the will and purpose of God. What Jacob said to his sons, as recorded for us in Genesis 49:1-33, manifests the wonderful hold that Jacob had on the mind of God, and what a remarkable hold the thoughts of God had on the heart of Jacob.

Jacob also worshipped as he was about to pass through the portal of death. He was not occupied with his own weakness, nor was he at all afraid of what lay ahead; but he was thinking of what was due to God, even when so weak, and when his days on earth were fulfilled. His spirit rose above all that had engaged him in the blessing of Joseph's sons, in the foretelling of what would mark Israel in that clear prophetic history, and above the weakness of the body, and his spirit went out to God in adoring worship. His thoughts were on God, and all that He had done for him, and been to Him, and this brought the worship that was so pleasurable to God. The third mark of Jacob's death was that he leaned upon the top of his staff. He had been a pilgrim, like Abraham and Isaac, and his pilgrim character marked him right to the end. Although at the beginning of his course he had been marked by self-reliance, and had proved that it was inconsistent with and insufficient for a pilgrim and stranger on the earth, he had learned that dependence on God should mark His saints at all times, and this comes out most blessedly at the end.

There was not the shadow of a doubt about Jacob's relations with God; He believed God, and like Abraham, his faith was counted for righteousness. Whatever men have thought, and may think

about Jacob, the spiritual mind readily perceives that Jacob highly valued God's blessing, and this because the blessing was from God. The last words of Jacob, and his last actions, clearly make known the righteous character of one who knew that he stood in the favour of God.

Balaam might well covet such a death as the death of Jacob, the death of the righteous; but, alas, Balaam was not a man like the righteous Jacob. Indeed, the Spirit of God makes it quite clear that he was an unrighteous man, for through the Apostle Peter He says, "Balaam the son of Bosor . . . loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:15). There are many like Balaam, they live for this world, and for the gratification of their lusts, and would fain have the portion of the righteous at the end. They want the best of both worlds, though in reality the believer has the best in this life as also in that which is to come, even as Paul wrote to Timothy, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8). This evil man, whose counsel caused Israel to trespass against the Lord (Numbers 31:16), did not repent of his sin, and his death is given in this same chapter which tells of his wicked counsel (Numbers 31:8). He lived the life of the unrighteous, and died the death of the unrighteous, perishing with the kings of Midian, against whom Israel warred by the commandment of the Lord. It is possible for an unrighteous man to turn from his unrighteousness at the end of his days, like the thief on the cross, and to die the death of the righteous, but such cases are exceptional. Wisdom calls upon the sinner to seek the Lord while He may be found; and we are told that, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Not only did Balaam covet the death of the righteous, but he said, "Let my last end be like his." When the Christian dies he enters the paradise of God to be with Jesus; he is "absent from the body, and present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). This is at the end of his earthly sojourn, but it is not his "last end." Abraham is seen in heaven in Luke 16:1-31, and Moses is seen alive with Jesus on the holy mount (Luke 9:1-62), and Jacob is also in heaven, for as Jehovah said, I am "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," and the commentary of the Lord on this is, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him" (Luke 20:37-38). But the last end of the righteous is yet to come. The Old Testament saints, the Scripture tells us, are not yet made perfect (Hebrews 11:40). They will no doubt be made perfect when they receive their new bodies to enter heaven with its eternal bliss. The righteous of this dispensation will receive their glorified bodies at the same time, whether they have died the death of the righteous, or are alive when the Lord comes. The secret of God in 1 Corinthians 15:51 teaches us that "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed"; and the change is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:49, "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." We are to be like Jesus (1 John 3:2), for whom we wait, "Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Php 3:21).

There will be different families of the righteous in heaven, every one named of the Father, and each blessed for eternity according to the will and purpose of God. The church will have its own peculiar place in relation to Christ as His body and His bride, and as His brethren. All in heaven will be there for the praise and pleasure of God, and for the honour of His Son; the last end of the righteous manifesting what God is in the greatness of His grace and in the wonders of His love.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Dependent Man

The Dependent Man

It is surpassing wonderful that the eternal Son of God should become Man, and that in Manhood He should enter into all that was proper to man. His human nature was real and perfect though sinless, and in the practical details of life He knew all the circumstances and conditions of men as a Man, having all the feelings, desires and aspirations belonging to the godly, and knowing what it was to be weary, hungry and thirsty. Jesus knew as no other man the depths of human sorrow, groaning in His spirit and weeping in the presence of death, as beholding its awful results for men, and in a special way for those He loved.

Psalms 16:1-11.

All the headings of the Psalms are inspired, and "Michtam of David" tells us that David was the instrument used by the Spirit of God to bring out the innermost feelings and thoughts of Christ as a Man in this world. Some scholars have taken the heading of this psalm to mean "A Golden jewel," but whatever its real meaning may be, it is indeed a golden jewel, a rich and precious treasure for every heart that values the Lord Jesus, and that delights to ponder His holy life on earth for the glory of God and the blessing of men.

Preserve Me, O God

Although possessing almighty power, and using it on behalf of men, the Son of God did not use His power to alleviate His own circumstances, or to shield Himself from the assaults of His enemies. He was a true Man, and had come into the place where He felt the need of the protection of God. Satan, through Herod, had sought to destroy Him when a Babe, but God intervened by sending His angel to instruct Joseph of the means to take for the preservation of Jesus.

It is one thing to be preserved of God and another to feel the need of His preservation in a hostile world, for God "is the preserver of all men, specially of those who believe" (1 Timothy 4:10). The more sensitive the heart is of the evil of the world, the more does it feel the need of God's preservation. With infinitely sensitive feelings, and knowing that all the forces of evil were bent upon His destruction, is it any wonder that the Spirit of Christ said, "Preserve me, O God"? For in Thee do I put My trust

Seven times in Luke's Gospel the Lord is found in prayer, which clearly evinces the complete reliance on God of the perfect Man. One of the Scriptures adduced to show that Christ's Manhood was real and perfect is, "I will put my trust in Him" (Hebrews 2:13). His unbroken confidence and dependence on God is expressed in the prayers of Jesus, manifesting the contrast between Him and the natural man, who is proud of his self-confidence and boasts in his self-reliance. The path of Jesus as a lowly, dependent Man was a lonely one, but He was ever in communion with God upon whom He relied at all times. When opposed by the Jews He told them, "And He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him" (John

8:29); and anticipating the betrayal by Judas and the forsaking of His disciples, He said, "Behold the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me" (John 16:32). The Son had proved throughout His earthly sojourn that the Father was worthy of His trust, and is confident of His presence with Him in the hour of His deepest sorrows and desertion by His disciples.

Israel's leaders knew well that His confidence was in God, and they reproached Jesus with it while He hung on the cross. The chief priests mocked Him, and the scribes and elders said, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God" (Matthew 27:41; Matthew 27:43). But His trust in God remained unshaken, even when He cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" And right at the end, when death in the fulness of its power had been met, it is to God He cries, "Save me from the lion's mouth: for Thou hast beard me from the horns of the unicorns" (Psalms 22:21). His trust in God to the very end was not put to shame, for His cry was answered in God raising Him from the dead.

Thou hast said unto the Lord

How great is our privilege in hearing the Son, as the dependent Man, pour out His heart to His God and Father. He had come to serve Jehovah, and a life of service for Him meant a life of constant communion with God, in which His every thought, feeling and desire were made known. This reminds us of another blessed Scripture, John 17:1-26, through which we are permitted to hear the wonderful utterances of the Son of God as He speaks to His God and Father.

Thou art My Lord

Subjection to God also marked the Son in His life of dependence. As a divine Person He had ever commanded, the hosts of heaven obeying His word; but in Manhood He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. Suffering was a new experience for a divine Person, but was a necessary condition of the true Manhood the Son had taken. He was the only Man who had a right to His own will, yet the only man who never exercised His own will. For every other man the expression of his own will is sin, but Jesus said, "Not my will, but Thine be done." Nor was it irksome for the Son to be subject and obedient, for He found pleasure in carrying out the will of His God and Father. My goodness extendeth not to Thee In the Son on earth there was the perfect expression of God's goodness to man, but there was also the perfect expression of the goodness that ought to be found in man towards God. Yet perfect goodness in man, if it could be found, brought nothing to God, being the normal requirement of man as God's creature. But perfect goodness is not found in man derived from Adam; it was only found in the Second Man, the Creator come in flesh, and as true Man He said, "My goodness extendeth not to Thee."

Whatever goodness there was in Adam innocent was destroyed in Adam guilty, so that the divine verdict on man is, "There is none good, no not one." According to human standards, we speak of "a good man," and Scripture recognises this standard, but according to the divine standard there is none good. When on earth the Lord was called "Good Master," but he replied, "There is none good but One, that is God," but there was not the faith in the one who approached the Lord to answer with Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

Although the Lord did not present His goodness as Man to God, there was the deepest pleasure for the Father in the perfections of His Son, in His constant dependence, in His unbroken

subjection and obedience to the Father in seeking only His will, and in the perfect goodness that answered to God's thoughts of what should be for Him in this world. The Son did not expect any reward for His goodness from God, acknowledging that man ought to be perfect in heart and walk before God. To the saints and the excellent

If the goodness of Jesus as Man did not extend to God, there were those who greatly benefited both from the divine goodness made known in Him and from what He was personally to them. To Him, His disciples were the excellent of the earth, for they were the saints of God, and His chosen companions. At His baptism, Jesus identified Himself with those who were righteous before God as having confessed their sins saying, "thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). but the Father at once announced who Jesus was, His beloved Son, in whom all His pleasure was found. The Son found His delight in those who were the chosen of God, and to them He confided the secrets of His heart, all the things that He had heard from the Father, and He called them now His friends (John 15:15). The Idolatry of Israel

Israel's idolatry had brought them into captivity, but there was a remnant ever faithful to God, and with that remnant the Lord identifies Himself. He would have no other God than Jehovah, nor would He have any part in their idolatrous sacrifices. In the coming day, under antichrist, Israel will return to idolatry, but God will have His faithful remnant, and here the Lord gives utterance to their thoughts, and to the feelings of their hearts in the midst of their trials, where He says, "their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips" (Psalms 16:4). The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance As the appointed Heir of all things Jesus would have as His inheritance all things in heaven and on earth, and included in this would be what Jehovah speaks of in Psalms 2:1-12, where He says, "Ask of me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the utter-most parts of the earth for Thy possession." Although the possessor of all things, while on earth there was none so poor as Jesus, for He could say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

Jesus had become poor that we might be rich, nevertheless He still had an inheritance of which the men of this world knew nothing, for God was His Father, and He was always able to say "My Father." What a blessed portion for the Son of God in the time of His poverty. When rejected by the cities in which His mighty works were done, He turned to Him who was His own saying, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth" (Matthew 11:25).

If the Father was His abiding portion, He was also His ever present portion of which His cup speaks, a portion to be enjoyed at any time. His cup from man was filled with suffering and sorrow, and He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but His cup was filled by the Father with a joy of which this world knows nothing, but which He has given His own to share (John 15:11). The lot given to Him was maintained by the Father, and whether it was in His path of deepest sorrow, or in the joy that lay ahead, the lines that marked it were in pleasant places. To all outward appearance His sojourn in this world was in rough places, and nothing attractive to the natural eye marked the portion of the Lord, but it was pleasant for Him to do the Father's will whatever that might bring to Him, and He allowed nothing to deflect Him from fully accomplishing all that the Father had given Him to do. It was a goodly heritage to Him that would secure the glory of the Father, even if it meant for Him enduring the cross and all its shame. The Counsel of Jehovah

Directed by God's word in communion with Him, the Son was ever obedient to His God and Father, and He would not take one step without the counsel of Jehovah. When confronted by Satan and his temptations, His reply was "It is written," which manifested the source of His counsel; and when Lazarus was sick, He remained two days where He was awaiting the counsel of His Father. It was not grievous for the Son to be obedient to the Father's will, for He delighted in His will, and gave thanks to Him for His counsel. When all seemed to be dark, in the night seasons, the Son of God was instructed by that which was formed within Him in communion with God. If there was the constant dependence upon God, there was also an intelligence that directed the Son in every trial that confronted Him. Whether questioned by lawyers, Pharisees, scribes, Herodians or Sadducees, there was ever the perfect answer that confounded His foes. In the dread anticipation of the cross in Gethsemane His words were perfect, whether it was in shrinking from the cup of judgment, or in taking it from the hand of His Father.

I have set the Lord always before me

Many devoted saints and servants of God have set the Lord before them, but only Jesus could say, I have set the Lord always before me. Every moment in the life of Jesus was lived for His God and Father, even as He said, "I do always those things that please Him." The Father was ever the object before Him, and the reason for His being found as a Man on earth.

Having the Father before Him, the Son had also the Father beside Him, at His right hand, His support in all His trials, and with the cross looming before Him, with none of His disciples able to stand with Him, He said, "Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." Satan might use Simon to seek to turn the Lord from the fulfilment of His Father's will, but the Lord had no thought of pitying Himself, and would not be turned from seeking His Father's will, a path in which He had the constant support of His Father.

We too have been called to set the Lord always before us, to walk in the path that was trodden perfectly by Jesus. All the grace we need to tread this path for the pleasure of God is available in Christ at God's right hand, and if we truly seek to be here for the Lord with Himself before us, we shall also find Him at our right hand, sustained by Him and directed by His word and counsel. My heart is glad

What holy enigmas are met as we contemplate the Son of God with the cross before Him. How deep was the trouble of His soul when He said, "What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." Yet He can also say, "My heart is glad," for He thought of the glory of His Father, and all that the accomplishment of His will and purpose would mean to the Father. For the Son of God the cross would mean the deepest sorrows, infinite sufferings and unmitigated divine judgment, but even with all this immediately before Him, Jesus could also think of the wonderful results of His enduring the cross, and because of this His heart was glad.

Gladness of heart for Jesus, in the midst of His sorrows, also came as knowing that He would rise from among the dead. His body would rest in Joseph's tomb, but it was in hope of the glorious resurrection morn. Although "it was not possible that He should be holden" of death (Acts 2:24), the Son of God rejoiced in the prospect of being raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. How greatly the Son rejoiced in the knowledge of His Father's care, "Thou wilt not leave . . . neither wilt Thou suffer . . . Thou wilt show me." The Path of Life For the Son of God become Man

the path of life lay through death. This is indeed wonderful that the originator of life should pass through death, so that as Man by resurrection He would enter the presence of God in heaven where, for Him, there was fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. This was the joy that was before Him that enabled Him to endure the cross, despising its shame. It is the joy of His having accomplished the will of His God and Father.

God's right hand is the Son's place by right, but it is also His as the mark of the Father's favour. This place of exaltation and glory is God's answer to all that man has done to His Son, but also God's answer to all that the Son has done for Him. Moreover, it is from God's right hand that the Son now carries out the Father's will, and ministers to His own, while waiting till His enemies are made the footstool of His feet.

What a blessed contemplation is the perfect Manhood of the Son of God and the holy life in which He lived in constant dependence upon God in subjection to His will. Obedience was pleasurable to the Son, though He learned it through the things that He suffered. In this Psalm Jesus is presented to us as an Object for the delight of our hearts, but in many of the things brought before us He is an example. The closing verses belong to Jesus alone, though it is given to us to follow Him in the path of life. In entering into death Jesus has taken the sting out of death for us, and as occupied with Him in His place before the Father, we too can say, "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Wm. C. Reid.

Extract from a Recent Letter

I am glad you are studying the seven churches. There is a needed lesson here for us in these times. Overcomers were never more needed, but unless there is a consciousness of evil, what need is there for overcoming? Everything conspires to accustom our eyes to man's world with all its horribleness, until we are apt to be indoctrinated. "The fashion of this world passeth away," and how many are attracted and drawn into its wake.

We have just finished in our Bible reading the Gospel of Luke. Quite a solemn epilogue after all the beauty of the walk and words of the beloved Lord. Those two unacquainted personally with the stupendous fact of a Risen Christ, and taking no pains to establish the fact, going away home, none too happily, and not in the joys of the truth that many had communicated.

William C. Reid, the editor and publisher of this magazine was called Home on 19th March, 1971. As he had prepared manuscripts for further issues, these will be published in due course, if the Lord will.

S. The Fall of Three Cities

The Fall of Three Cities

Although the mass of men are unaware of it. God is intensely interested in all His creatures, even as the Lord Jesus said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father" (Matthew 10:29). Individuals, nations and cities all come under the watchful eye of God, His saints being cared for in a special way, but His providential goodness and His government are ever manifest to those who have eyes to see. The cities of men are the seats of government and learning, where are displayed their treasures and culture, and where most of their pleasures are found. Alas, the cities are also centres of vice and all kinds of corruption, where the depraved nature of man finds its gratification and manifests the extent of its debasement. The outstanding features of man's city were seen when Cain "went out from the presence of the Lord" and "builded a city ". There was confessed murder by Lamech, the agricultural industry of Jabal, the music of Jubal, and the arts and crafts of Tubal-cain. With these things there was that introduced which would keep man busy and charmed, with all thought of God forgotten, and the voice of conscience silenced.

Sodom

Lot saw the country that surrounded Sodom to be "well watered everywhere"; it was "as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar" (Genesis 13:10). With such a rich hinterland, Sodom no doubt became prosperous, and its prosperity was the cause of its downfall. This is made clear by the Lord through the prophet, where He says to Israel, "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her . . . neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy (Ezekiel 16:49). Instead of using the prosperity that God, in His goodness, had given to alleviate the conditions of those in need, they used their wealth to gratify themselves in gross wickedness.

Pride is the first thing mentioned by the Lord, and it is the leading member of the seven things that are an abomination unto the Lord (Proverbs 6:17); it was the cause of Satan's downfall (Ezekiel 28:17), and the cause of the fall of many another, even as Scripture teaches, "A man's pride shall bring him low" (Proverbs 29:23), and "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). Pride marks nations, such as is recorded in Scripture, "We have heard of the pride of Moab" (Isaiah 16:6), it marks individuals, and also cities, as here in Sodom. The Lord, who hates pride, takes account of it, wherever it is found, and deals with it in His government.

Whatever caused the pride of Sodom, we are not told: it may have been its great prosperity, for men are very proud of their possessions, especially if they have acquired them by their industry or natural ability. "Fulness of bread" in Sodom certainly showed prosperity, but instead of thanksgiving to God, and the desire to use what He had given them in His interests, the inhabitants gave themselves over to pleasure, and that of the most depraved kind. They were "lovers of their own selves", for they did not "strengthen the hands of the poor and needy", as they

ought to have done.

There was also "abundance of idleness", which gave the men of Sodom plenty of time for their pleasures. When Adam was driven from Eden, he was to eat of the ground with sorrow all the days of his life, and God added, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Genesis 3:17-19). The sons of Cain, with their music and arts, had attempted to take the sorrow out of life; the men of Sodom, with their abundance of idleness, had evidently managed to eat their bread without the sweat of Adam. The pride, luxury and leisure of Sodom brought in grievous sin, which was not unnoticed by God, for "the Lord said. Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it" (Genesis 18:20-21). Alas, when the angels were in the house of Lot, they found that the grievous sin of Sodom was according to the cry that had been heard by the Lord in heaven.

Abraham's intercession for Sodom is lovely, and how pleasing it must have been to God, who listened patiently to His servant, who was separate from Sodom and all connected with it, save with Lot, who had been ensnared into association with it. Lot was related to Abraham, and it was no doubt to spare Lot and his family that Abraham pleaded with God. A patient and merciful God was willing to spare Sodom if ten righteous persons were found in it, but they were not to be found. So far as we know, there was but one righteous man, and that was Lot, who was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked", and his righteous soul was vexed "from day to day with their unlawful deeds" (2 Peter 2:7-8). In mercy, the angels dragged righteous Lot out of Sodom, and the consuming judgment of God fell upon it and upon Gomorrah, turning them into ashes, "making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly" (2 Peter 2:6). All thought of God had gone from the hearts and minds of the men of Sodom, and only self-indulgence occupied them, with the grievous fruits of divine judgment. The record of these things has been left for men, in the holy Scriptures, that they might learn of the ways of God, but the sad history of man shows that he has no desire to learn from God, preferring to go his own way.

Jerusalem

Having the oracles of God, there was no excuse for the favoured city of Jerusalem going in the way of Sodom. Jerusalem was the most highly privileged city on earth, for God's holy ark had been brought there, and Jehovah's glory had been enshrined there in the temple Solomon had built. The worship of Jehovah centred there; His priests ministered in His sanctuary; His king sat upon His throne; and God had given all the enemies of Israel into their hands.

Before the reign of Solomon had passed, idolatry had found a place in Israel, and because of it God said He would divide the kingdom, and give ten tribes into the hand of Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:33-36). As soon as Jeroboam sat upon his throne, he led his people into the sin that appeared at the foot of Sinai, for he made two golden calves, and because of this idolatry the ten tribes were led into captivity, for the kings after Jeroboam followed in his idolatrous footsteps.

Grievous as were the sins of Sodom, and the sins of the ten tribes, they were not to be compared with the excesses of the city of Jerusalem. Grieving over the sins of Jerusalem, Jehovah said, "Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters . . . neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine

abominations more than they" (Ezekiel 16:48; Ezekiel 16:51). These awful abominations are shown in Ezekiel 8:1-18. Is it any wonder that the Lord said the evil of Jerusalem far surpassed that of Sodom and Samaria? Yet there was a remnant true to God in the midst of the evil, and the Lord called to His servants, whom He had appointed, to execute His judgments upon the guilty city, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" (Ezekiel 9:4). Lot and his daughters were spared from the doom of Sodom: God had His remnant in Jerusalem, who were marked by Him to escape His consuming judgment. At a later date, God's judgment again fell upon the guilty city, the city over which the Son of God incarnate wept, and to whom He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee" (Luke 13:34). What the Lord foretold of the desolation of Jerusalem in Luke 21:20 was fulfilled when Titus, the Roman general, took the city. Another judgment awaits Jerusalem, as prophesied in Zechariah 14:1-2, when the idolatry spoken of by Daniel, and by the Lord Himself (Matthew 24:15), is introduced by antichrist, the man of sin.

Babylon Of the city built by Nebuchadnezzar, in which he boasted, there was a prophecy by Isaiah, long before the date of its accomplishment, "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah" (Isaiah 13:19). As surely as this prophecy was fulfilled, so shall the prophecies of Revelation 18:1-24 be fulfilled. Foreseeing the divine judgment upon the false church, which professed to belong to Christ, but which was utterly unfaithful to Him, an angel from heaven, "cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Revelation 18:2).

Christendom, which has been exalted to heaven with the privilege of the light of God, has far exceeded in iniquity the sins of Sodom and the sins of Jerusalem. Under the cloak of Christ's Name, professing Christendom embraces systems of religion that are diabolical in nature, and utterly hateful to God and to those who value the holy Name of Christ. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, the Lord told His disciples that the children of the wicked one would be found among the wheat in the kingdom of heaven, that is, in that which professed His Name on earth.

Paul warned the elders of Ephesus of the grievous wolves who would enter into the Christian circle, not sparing the flock. John spoke of the antichristian teachers who had been within, but had gone out. Jude wrote of "certain men crept in unawares . . . ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." The Apostle Peter joins these servants of the Lord to tell us that "there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them . . . and many shall follow their pernicious ways." The pride that was found in Sodom is also found in the Christian profession of the last days, where "men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers . . . despisers of those that are good . . . lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:1-5). In these western lands, where there has been the bright light of the Gospel, men are turning from the truth, and the things that marked Sodom, the corruption and violence, are to be found everywhere.

There is the pride of human achievement, the boasting in the religious circles of progress, "being rich and increased with goods", and there are evidences of luxury everywhere that kings of a past century would have envied. No one need be hungry, for there is fulness of bread, just as there was in Sodom, and there is plenty of leisure, or as it says in regard to Sodom, "abundance of idleness". Men are not seeking God in their leisure, for they are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, and in their pleasures the sin of Sodom is not wanting. Nor has God forgotten the persecution of His saints by the false church, in which "was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" (Revelation 18:24); and when her judgment comes, it will be celebrated in heaven, for the Lord has said, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her" (Revelation 18:20). How awful will the divine vengeance be, as indicated in the following verse, "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all".

Every part of Babylon will come under judgment; its world of music "shall be heard no more at all"; its world of science shall not be found any more; its great industrial system, which has made it so rich, will for ever pass in judgment; its culture and philosophy "shall shine no more at all"; and that which speaks of nature's purest joy will not be found there, for the whole system will go for ever in God's consuming judgment.

All around us today we see this great system of worldly religion, fast going on to judgment, and there is a voice for the saints of God, sounding from heaven, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4). His own will recognise in this call the voice of the Lord Himself, for no other can say, "My people". He would not have His own mixed up with such a wicked system, for association with evil defiles.

Man was tried in innocency in Eden in perfect conditions, yet he failed grievously. In Sodom, we see what man is, not in innocency, but with an environment very similar to that of Eden, for the plain of Jordan, where Sodom was, was like "the garden of God". With luxury and leisure, there was pride, and in its train the corruption and violence that drew upon it the divine judgment. Then God took up Israel as a nation, separated them from the idolatrous nations around, dwelt among them, showed them His glory, His signs and wonders, gave them His living oracles, protected them from their enemies, brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey, gave them a priesthood whereby they could approach Him, and gave them a king to sit upon His throne in their midst. Yet in spite of every privilege, Israel rebelled against God, Jerusalem, the city of their king, and the centre of their worship, becoming the scene of idolatry and violence. God often intervened governmentally, punishing His wayward people, until the only remedy was the captivity, and the destruction of the city. And what shall we say of Christendom? It has been most highly favoured, favoured beyond the natural privileges of Sodom, or the religious privileges of Jerusalem, having the whole revelation of God in the completed word of God, and the presence of the Spirit of God in His House. Its iniquities have merited the awful judgment that awaits it, and that soon shall be executed by a righteous God.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Father and the Son with Us.

The Father and the Son with Us. Is it the habit of our souls to turn instinctively to the Father and the Son, speaking to them in quiet and holy intimacy, knowing that they are with us? No doubt the measure and character of our communion depends on the measure of our love to Christ, and on the extent of our obedience to His will. Such communion is the fruit of a known relationship, brought into the heart by the Holy Spirit, Who is also the power for this blessed and heavenly communion.

While here on the earth, The Son spoke of the Father being in Him (John 14:10), and also of the Father being with Him (John 16:32). We can see something of the import and distinction of these immense truths. The Father being in Him, He was the perfect expression of all that the Father is, so that He said, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." But when He speaks of the Father being with Him, it is for the comfort and joy of His heart in the moment when all would forsake Him. With ourselves, we are indwelt by God, so that His blessed nature and character might be manifested in us in all our ways down here; but we have this blessed promise that the Father and the Son will dwell with us, so that we might know the comfort and joy their company affords. The practical effect of our living in the light of this precious promise is immense. Could we allow anything inconsistent, in our lives or communications, with the holiness of God if we lived in the consciousness that the Father and the Son dwelt with us? In Psalms 16:1-11 we see a Man living in the consciousness of Jehovah being at his right hand (Psalms 16:8). This caused Him to trust in God, to find His delight in the saints, to refuse identification with the world, to find His portion in the Lord, to bless the Lord from Whom He received His counsel, to set the Lord always before Him, to have perfect confidence in Him even with death before Him, to find fulness of joy and eternal pleasures in God's presence in another world. Will not the consciousness of the presence with us of the Father and the Son have a similar effect upon our lives?

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Feasts of Jehovah.

The Feasts of Jehovah.

Leviticus 23:1-44.

These feasts were instituted by Jehovah, and divinely recorded on the pages of inspiration, to trace for us God's thoughts regarding the blessing of His people Israel. Although this Scripture specially contemplates the blessing of God's earthly people, we can also discern in it His way of blessing for the saints of this dispensation. Whether it be the blessing of Israel, or of the church, all is secured in the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through Jacob, in Genesis 49:1-33, the Spirit of God had already traced the tortuous history of the nation of Israel in a remarkable prophetic survey; a history that not only faithfully presented their weaknesses and failures, but which also brought to light the blessings that God had reserved for them in sovereign mercy, according to the promises given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In this chapter we have the settled purpose of God to gather His people around Himself, that there they might enjoy His rest, the fruit of the work of His own dear Son, and find richest blessing for their deep and abiding joy.

There are five revelations in this chapter, each beginning with the words "And Jehovah spake unto Moses." In these divine unfoldings we learn how the feasts are connected in the thoughts of God. The first revelation unites the sabbath, the passover and the feast of unleavened bread; the second couples the firstfruits and the wave-loaves; the remaining three revelations are for the trumpets, the day of atonement, and the feast of tabernacles.

Though grouped with the two feasts which follow, the sabbath has a distinctive place, as will be observed from the position it occupies. At the close of Leviticus 23:2 are the words "These are my set feasts"; then comes the announcement of the sabbath, and afterwards, a new beginning is made with the opening words of Leviticus 23:3, "These are the set feasts of Jehovah." The feasts of the passover, unleavened bread, firstfruits and wave-loaves are all held within the first six months of the Jewish year; the last three are on the seventh month. Each revelation, saving that of the day of atonement, was to be passed on to the children of Israel; the words "Speak unto the children of Israel" are omitted in this case. The Sabbath.

(Leviticus 23:1; Leviticus 23:3.) The children of Israel were not left to decide when they should gather together in the presence of Jehovah; there were set feasts, fixed times which Jehovah appointed as holy convocations; gatherings that were consonant with the holy character of the God who had chosen Israel to be His people. Because of its recurrence each week, the sabbath constantly kept before Israel the thought of rest. Work was to be done on six days; "But on the seventh day is the sabbath of rest," when toil ceased and rest began. The word sabbath means cessation, and God was indicating in it that He had in His purpose a time when toil would for ever cease. Each sabbath brought this thought of rest before them, but the rest of each sabbath was broken, or brought to a close, by the labours of the other six days.

After the six days in which God had prepared the earth for man's abode, He rested on the seventh day from His labours. But His rest was soon broken by the entrance of sin into the world, and from that time God worked afresh, not to patch up the ruin of the first creation, but to produce a new creation, which Satan could not mar nor sin defile. With this new creation before Him, the Son of God was found as a workman in this world, saying, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). In His labours the Lord Jesus knew what weariness was, and was without a resting place for His head, labouring even on the sabbath to bring relief to the stricken sons of Israel; yea, He went into death, rejected by the nation, lying there while the High Priest and the leaders of Israel kept their sabbath. So far as bringing Israel into the sabbath of rest was concerned, it seemed as if Christ's work had failed, even as He speaks prophetically in spirit in Isaiah 49:4, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain." God had called Israel to the land of promise, but we learn from Hebrews 3:19, that "They could not enter" into God's rest there, "Because of unbelief." Joshua brought the people into the land of Canaan, but he did not bring them into rest, else David would not have written afterwards, "Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." The divine conclusion of the matter in Hebrews 4:1-16 is, "There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God." Israel, in the Millennium, on the ground of the New Covenant, and the church in the Paradise of God, will assuredly enter into God's rest; both because of the work of the cross. The rest for which the Father and the Son have been working is an eternal rest that shall never be disturbed, interrupted or broken. Israel's Millennial blessing will close when the heaven and earth pass away, but they will no doubt pass into the earthly side of the eternal rest on the new earth. On the heavenly side, the saints who have been called to share the divine rest of the Father's House will rest with Him in the deep joy of His love. Nothing of all that lies in the Father's counsels will remain unfulfilled; all will be secured in a new creation, where there is not a trace of the distress and sorrow caused by the entry of sin and death into the old creation. Of this new and eternal scene the Scripture says, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:4-5). This will be the final and eternal fulfilment of what was in God's mind in relation to "The sabbath of rest." The Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread.

(Leviticus 23:4-8.) We have already observed that these two feasts are grouped with the sabbath in the first divine revelation, and it is not difficult to understand the reason for this when we learn that Christ's death, which is the basis of all divine blessing for us, is typified in the passover. God very clearly brings this before us in 1st Corinthians, where it is written, "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). Without the death of Christ, there never could have been a sabbath of rest, where God could gather those He has blessed through that same death, around Himself. The details of the passover are not given here; for these we must go to Exodus 12:1-51, where we have the institution of the feast. Many precious truths are to be learned from the details of this remarkable celebration, but its introduction into this chapter is to show its place in the ways of God with His people. If the sabbath brings before us the great end that God has in view in all His ways, the passover teaches that to secure His rest God begins with the death of Christ. God's thoughts for the blessing of His own are set down in such Scriptures as these, long before the coming of Him in whom all would be fulfilled and accomplished. Indeed, He "was foreordained before the foundation of the world," to be the "Lamb without blemish and without

spot," through whom redemption would be secured for God's people, so that they might be able to gather around Him in His sabbath of rest. The day and hour for the passover were not at man's discretion; God had said, "In the first month, on the fourteenth of the month, between the two evenings, is the passover of Jehovah." This was before the blessed Lord when "He said to His disciples, Ye know that after two days is the passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified." Israel's leaders, ignorant of God's ways, hating God's Son, and blinded in their unbelief, said, "Not on the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people" (Matthew 26:1-5). But God carried out His plans in spite of the chief priests, scribes and elders of the people, and at the appointed hour the holy victim was slain, and His precious blood was shed, and redemption was accomplished.

Following immediately on the passover, being inseparable from it as its complement, was the feast of unleavened bread. The holy convocation, based on the passover, took place on the first day of this feast. During the seven days unleavened bread only was to be eaten: there was to be the complete absence of the working of evil, for leaven in Scripture invariably speaks of the penetrating, diffusing and corrupting effects of different forms of evil. Poor, deluded Israel, that should have maintained such holy separation from evil, was permeated with it when the Son of God was among them, so that He had to warn His disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. He also warned His own concerning the pernicious doctrines of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, speaking of them as leaven. He also described the political evil of the Herodians as "The leaven of Herod" (Matthew 16:6; Matthew 16:12; Mark 8:15).

Under the new covenant Israel will yet be blessed of God in the land of promise, and will be free from the corrupting influences of hypocrisy, infidelity and political ambition, which marked their leaders when the Lord was on earth. With the law written on their hearts and minds, and with the knowledge that all their sins and iniquities are remembered no more, they will gather together in true holiness in God's presence to praise and worship Him. While Israel waits for that day, it is our privilege now as Christians, having the spirit of the new covenant, to keep the feast, "Not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Each day of the week is a feast day for us, in which it is our holy and happy privilege to answer to God's mind for His saints — to be here in separation from all the evils of the flesh and the world; to be marked by godly sincerity in all our ways, truth in the inward parts giving-character to all our thoughts and actions.

God would have His people to understand that their rest and blessing were not on account of their efforts, therefore, He commanded that no servile work was to be done on the days of holy convocation, the first and last days of the feast. They were to rest before Jehovah in the knowledge that all their blessings were founded on the sacrifice of fire, which they were to present to Him on the seven days of the feast. Israel will yet learn this great truth; they will know that their every blessing depends on the sacrifice of Christ, who gave Himself for them. Christians have this precious knowledge now through God's wondrous grace, and as we read such Scriptures as these we understand the meaning of Romans 15:4, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." The Wave-Sheaf.

(Leviticus 23:9-11.) The waving of the sheaf of firstfruits belonged to the land that Jehovah was about to give to Israel; the exact day of the month is not given, as in the previous feasts, but the day of the week is carefully prescribed, "On the morrow after the sabbath." God has not left us to our own thoughts regarding what was in His mind in regard to the firstfruits, for it is written in 1 Corinthians 15:23, "Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming." Christ, out of death, is the beginning of the great harvest that God had planned, and for which He had been working from the beginning. How accurate is the antitype to the type: it was in the land that Jehovah gave to Israel that Christ rose in triumph from among the dead, and it was on the first day of the week, the "Morrow after the sabbath."

Before Jehovah was the sheaf to be waved, and for the acceptance of His people. How few on earth knew of the great event of that first "Lord's Day," but how deeply it must have stirred the hosts of heaven and hell. And how blessed for God that His beloved Son was out of death into which He had entered to secure His glory and to give effect to all His eternal counsels of love! God would have us to know that the resurrection of Christ was of the greatest import to Him, and delightful to His heart; for surely this is what we are to learn from the waving of the sheaf before Jehovah. But it was for the acceptance of God's people!

Israel's day of acceptance is not yet, but it is in prospect, even as it has been prophesied by Ezekiel, "In the mountain of the height of Israel . . . there will I accept them . . . as a sweet savour will I accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered" (Ezekiel 20:40-41). Our acceptance as Christians rests upon the same paschal sacrifice, and is in the same blessed Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, risen from among the dead. "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:6-7).

(Leviticus 23:12-13.) On the day of the waving of the sheaf of firstfruits, a yearling he-lamb, without blemish, was to be offered for a burnt-offering, and with it an oblation and a drink-offering. The burnt-offering brings the sacrifice of Christ before us as portraying Him who gave Himself in death for the accomplishment of God's will: "An offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Ephesians 5:2). While this sacrifice was wholly for the pleasure of Jehovah, it made atonement for the offerer, and was for his acceptance (Leviticus 1:4). The male usually has to do with the position of the offerer, the female with the state; so that the he-lamb would emphasise the blessedness of the place into which we have been brought through the death of Christ. Christ's perfection and holiness are depicted in the victim being without blemish; His life of beauty and freshness in the age of the lamb. The oblation, which typifies the holy Manhood of the Lord is specially emphasised, because two tenths of fine flour are required instead of the usual one tenth (see Exodus 29:40-41; Numbers 15:4-5). Does not this bring before us that it is the same Jesus in resurrection that was here in meekness and grace before the cross? His humanity is the same, although the conditions of life into which He has entered are entirely different. He has now a body of flesh and bones — a body of glory; a body that is not subject to the limitations of the body of flesh and blood, but it is the same Jesus, having the same nature and the same life. The fine flour of this offering speaks of that humanity, so fine in its texture, a heavenly humanity, in which every feature was perfect, and where all blended in a perfection that showed no salient feature.

Whether we think of Christ's gentleness, meekness, holiness, grace, love, faithfulness, patience, zeal for God's glory, kindness to men, or of any of His traits, not one feature of that heavenly manhood overshadowed any other feature; nor was there one feature that was proper to man missing from that holy and perfect life. Luke 1:35 is fulfilled in the mingling of the oil with the fine flour, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest overshadow thee, wherefore the holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God." He was truly a perfect Man, the son born of the virgin, yet Son of God; His holy, heavenly humanity conceived in the power of the Holy Spirit, every particle of His sinless nature characterised by the grace and perfection of the Spirit. The drink offering completed the offerings of the feast, telling of the joy for the heart of God that was brought through Him who poured out His soul unto death to secure all that lay in His will.

(Leviticus 23:14.) After Jehovah had His portion — His heart's delight and joy in the presentation of the risen Christ, and of all that marked Him in life and death — the people were free to feed upon the harvest His goodness had provided for them. It is necessary for us to learn that there could not have been any blessing for us apart from the resurrection of Christ. This is the teaching of 1 Corinthians 15:17, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." All God's blessing for us has been secured through the death of Christ, and is available for us in Christ, risen out of death. In this Scripture we have particularly what God has given His saints to feed upon; the food that comes to us in the risen Christ. The precious food that comes to us in the risen Christ may be "Green ears," Christ in the freshness and maturity of his life down here, accomplishing the will of God, and bringing before men the Father's grace. It may be "Roast corn," Christ passing through the fire of divine judgment to secure the glory of God, and the blessing of His own. We may also feed on Christ as "Bread," "The Bread of God," "The bread of life," "The living bread," upon whom God feeds, the joy and satisfaction of His heart, the One in whom He has ever found infinite delight. It is by feeding on Christ as the living bread that we have received eternal life, and the divine life that God has communicated to us in His grace is sustained by feeding upon the bread of life. What joy is brought to the heart in communion with the Father and the Son as we feed upon Him who gave Himself in death to accomplish the Father's will, and who is now risen and seated at God's right hand in Heaven.

We have already noticed that in setting apart the sabbath God announced His determinate counsel to secure a rest into which He would bring His people. The celebration of the passover recalled to Israel God's grace towards them in Egypt; they were sheltered by the blood of the lamb, and they fed upon the lamb roast with fire. To us the passover speaks of "Christ our passover . . . sacrificed for us." We have found shelter from judgment through the precious blood of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, and delight to feed upon Him who died in our stead. Intimately connected with the pass-over is the feast of unleavened bread, which intimates the character of walk that should mark those who have to do with a righteous and holy God, a walk of practical holiness in separation from the evil and spirit of the world. The waving of the sheaf of firstfruits presents a risen Christ. Israel will yet find pleasure in waving Christ before God; they will discover in a day not far distant that God has blessing for them on the ground of a new covenant, secured through the death of the Messiah they rejected, and ministered by Christ risen from among the dead. While that day awaits poor deluded Israel, those who form the church, which God has purchased with the blood of His own, have the privilege of waving the sheaf of firstfruits

— presenting to God His own dear Son, whom He has raised from the dead by His mighty power, the One in whom He finds His ineffable delight. The Wave-Loaves

(Leviticus 23:15-16). This feast is called in Exodus 34:22 and elsewhere "The feast of weeks," and in the Acts "The day of Pentecost." As in the case of the previous feasts, the New Testament clearly brings out what God had in mind in calling our attention to the feast of weeks. There was the literal fulfilling of the seven sabbaths after the resurrection of Christ till the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. On this day, separated from the waving of the sheaf of firstfruits by fifty days, yet intimately connected with it, a new meat offering was to be offered to Jehovah.

(Leviticus 23:17). The new oblation consisted of two wave-loaves, of two tenths of fine flour, baked with leaven. Two loaves bring in what was new in Israel. In the next chapter we read of twelve cakes of two tenths of fine flour, which represented the twelve tribes of Israel upon the table of showbread before Jehovah. Does it not therefore seem that the two loaves represent two of the tribes of Israel? When the Lord Jesus was upon earth, the ten tribes of Israel were dispersed, and those in the land were of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Doubtless there were individuals from the other tribes, like Anna of the tribe of Asher; but the mass were of the two tribes that remained with the house of David, and from which the remnant returned to the land in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Jehovah's new meat offering was then from these two tribes when the Holy Spirit came, on the day of Pentecost.

If we realise that this chapter is especially dealing with God's ways with Israel, we shall understand that the church in its Gentile character, is not in view here. Historically, the church was composed of a remnant of these two tribes at the beginning. When the full truth of the church came out, it was seen as a divine organism, "One body . . . one loaf" (1 Corinthians 10:17). The church has been formed in the power of God, "For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles" (1 Corinthians 12:13). God is not teaching the truth of the mystery in Leviticus 23:1-44; that great secret was hid in God until Christ took His seat on high at God's right hand, and the Holy Spirit came to bring us into the knowledge of God's great secrets. The fine flour of the wave-loaves tells us that those who form the church partake of the nature of Christ; "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:11). They were sanctified when the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost, and all who since then have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ have received the Holy Spirit. But the divine nature is received by the operation of the Spirit through the word of God: it is a new nature. The new meat offering was composed of those who were born anew, and who were set apart for God by the coming upon them of the Holy Spirit. But the reception of a new nature does not do away with the old; we still retain it until our journey on earth is over. Therefore the two wave-loaves were to be baked with leaven. It was this mixture of leaven with the fine flour that distinguished the new meat offering from the meat offering that was normally offered to Jehovah. In Christ there was no other nature than that which was pleasing to God; it was all fine flour. But in the baking of the loaves the action of the leaven was stayed; and it is thus that Christians can be before God — the working of the flesh, the old nature, held in check in self-judgment. In the cross, by the sacrifice of Christ, God "Condemned sin in the flesh"; so that God can receive us in perfect consistency with His holiness as having dealt with sin in judgment. When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost, the cloven tongues were "Like as of fire," which surely answers to the setting aside of the flesh in those who formed the meat offering. Another matter worthy of note

is that the wave loaves were to be brought out from the habitations of Israel. This is exactly what took place, for the "Firstfruits unto Jehovah" came only from Israel. It could not be disclosed at that time that they were the firstfruits of a great company, from among the Gentiles as well as from Israel, who would be companions of Christ, the love gift of the Father to the Son.

(Leviticus 23:18). Along with the loaves there were presented seven he-lambs without blemish, yearlings, one young bullock, and two rams, for a burnt offering to Jehovah. Each sacrifice was to have its complementary meat offering and drink offering; the whole forming one great offering by fire, for a sweet odour, unto Jehovah. How wonderful is the church's presentation to God! It is before Him in the savour and acceptance of the rich and varied offering that speaks so precious of Christ. One he-lamb sufficed at the waving of the sheaf of firstfruits, but the divine fulness of the seven lambs assures our poor hearts before Him of the place He has given to us in grace through His death. The young bullock was the greatest expression, so far as man was concerned, of the burnt offering, indicating that God would give us the greatest and fullest assurance of His grace in giving Christ to die to bring us nigh to Himself. Two rams are for testimony, and call our attention to the energy of devotedness and affection that caused the Lord Jesus to give Himself in sacrifice to God for our acceptance.

(Leviticus 23:19). For a sin offering, one buck of the goats was to be offered. There was no sin offering with the sheaf of firstfruits, which speaks of the resurrection of Him who was the "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Of Him it is written in the Scriptures, "In Him sin is not"; but this could not be said of those typified in the wave-loaves with leaven. Although accepted before God in all the efficacy of the burnt offering, and although there had been the action of the fire, both at the cross and in the coming of the Holy Spirit, yet because sin was there, in the nature they had from Adam, and because they had sinned, there was the need of the sin offering. The goat was often used for a sin offering, notably on the Day of Atonement, when two were brought for "The congregation of the children of Israel," one being sacrificed, to meet the claims of God, teaching propitiation; the other, the scape-goat, bearing all their sins away, and teaching the truth of substitution. It is also the sin offering for a prince in Leviticus 4:1-35; and was the "Sin offering for the people" in Leviticus 9:15. From these, and other Scriptures, it can be seen that the goat is really the sin offering for the children of Israel, and emphasises the Jewish character of this chapter.

(Leviticus 23:20). "Two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings" give us God's testimony of the place of communion into which He has now brought us through Christ's death and resurrection. How great is the grace that has brought us before God where we have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and where as saints we have fellowship together in the light of the revelation of God in Jesus, whose precious blood cleanses us from all sin. Like the priests who fed upon these peace offerings, we have the privilege of feeding upon Christ, the Lamb of God, who gave Himself to bring us into this favoured place.

(Leviticus 23:21). There was no convocation on the day of waving the sheaf of firstfruits; this awaited the offering of the wave-loaves. When these types were fulfilled, the resurrection was not heralded by a public gathering, although there was a private gathering: "The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews." On the day of Pentecost it was very different, the disciples "were all together in

one place," and when the news of the effects of the presence of the Holy Spirit was noised abroad, "The multitude came together." On that historic day the gathering of the disciples was indeed a holy convocation.

Many notable gatherings had taken place in the long, chequered history of Israel, but there had never been one like this. There was the gathering at the foot of Sinai when "Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God," when the mount burned with fire, and when the people heard God's voice they "Intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more." Then there was the great assemblage for the dedication of the temple, when the ark was brought into its rest, and when "The priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." These were outstanding assemblies, but they are not to be compared with the day when the church was formed by the coming of the Holy Spirit, and when the Jews from many parts and the proselytes with them were all amazed, and said, "We do hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." The company that was formed by the coming of the Spirit bore the marks that characterise a holy convocation. It was marked by "Prayer and supplication," and sought the mind of the Lord from the Holy Scriptures (Acts 1:14; Acts 1:16-21). Nor were they engaged in servile work when the Spirit came upon them. Their testimony by the Spirit directed the thoughts of Israel to Christ, risen from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of God. They presented salvation in Him to the people, saying, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Salvation was not to be attained through works of law: they were to rest from their labours, and find salvation in the One whom wicked hands had crucified and slain, but whom God had raised and glorified.

(Leviticus 23:22). This remarkable verse comes between Pentecost and the blowing of trumpets, between the time of the coming of the Spirit of God and the testimony for the regathering of Israel. The actual provision that God makes for the poor and the stranger is most touching, and not to be lost sight of while seeking the typical meaning of the passage. God takes care of all His creatures; the poor and the stranger that the rich would think little of, He would not have neglected. The Son of God would be found in this world, the possessor of all things, yet poor; poor that we might be rich, and when He came He preached the Gospel to the poor, as had been prophesied before of Him in the Old Testament Scripture. Yea, He was a stranger in the world His hands had made, having the stable for His birthplace; no room for His head, and called a Samaritan.

After the saints of the present period have been caught up to be forever with the Lord, (the harvest resulting from the sowing of the great Sower), and before the nation of Israel is summoned to return to the promised land, a faithful remnant will be sustained of God during that period of trouble and trial. The instruction given by the Lord Jesus to His disciples in Matthew 24:1-51 has special reference to this remnant. Such Scriptures as this, and the Psalms will be of special value to the remnant, but they will no doubt be fed and sustained by feeding on other Scriptures which may not specially refer to them, but which God can use for their help. With this "Poor of the flock" there may be individual strangers from among the Gentiles who will share in their faithfulness, and in the protection and care of God for them. Such will not be able to enter into the truth connected with the mystery of God, as saints can now, but the Spirit of God will surely feed them with what is in the corners of the field, and the gleanings of the harvest. The sabbath, being a weekly feast, kept constantly before Israel the thought of God's rest, into which He would certainly bring His people in His own good time. To secure the purpose of God the death of Christ was necessary, and this is

brought before us in the passover. Those who are sheltered by the blood of the Lamb are called upon to keep the feast of unleavened bread, to walk in this world for the will of God, apart from every form of evil. But the Christ who died is risen again as is typified in the waving of the sheaf of firstfruits, and a new meat offering is offered to God, a new company of saints who have the nature of Christ, and who were indwelt by the Spirit of God at Pentecost. These annual feasts took place in the first six months of the Jewish year: the three feasts which follow were celebrated in the seventh month. The Blowing of Trumpets

(Leviticus 23:23-25). On the first day of the seventh month there was a blowing of trumpets which celebrated in advance the regathering of the nation of Israel. This seventh month marks a fresh stage in the ways of God with His earthly people. Moses forewarned Israel of what the consequences of their unfaithfulness would be, and prophesied that Jehovah would drive them among all nations, but that in the end they would "Return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all His commandments" (Deuteronomy 29:1-29; Deuteronomy 30:1-8).

What Moses prophesied came to pass; the ten tribes were taken captive by the king of Assyria, and within a hundred and twenty years all that were left, or nearly all of the remaining two tribes, were carried into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. After seventy years of captivity, a remnant of the two tribes, under Zerubbabel, by the decree of Cyrus king of Persia, returned to the land to rebuild the house of God. This remnant was augmented by companies which returned under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. It was to the descendants of this remnant that the Lord Jesus came. Because of their rejection of the Son of God, divine judgment overtook Jerusalem and the inhabitants of the land of Israel, and Jerusalem has until recently been under the heel of different powers.

During the present century there has been a gradual drift of Jews into Palestine, chiefly because of oppression in Russia and Germany. This latter brought tens of thousands into the land. Under the protection of the great western powers, a Jewish state has again been established in Palestine, according to the promise of the British government during the first world war. It may be this that is referred to in Isaiah 18:1-7, where Israel is viewed as "A nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled!" The great power which shadows Israel with its protecting wings is beyond the countries with which Israel had to do in the days gone by; it is a maritime power "That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters . . . swift messengers " (Isaiah 18:1-2). With such help, Israel "Lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye." This ensign, with the name Israeli upon it, has been hoisted in the holy land, and the trumpet has been sounded. But this is not the trumpet sound of the first day of the seventh month; it has not been sounded at the command of Jehovah. God's time for intervening on behalf of His ancient people has not yet come, and while they are struggling to establish themselves as a nation, Jehovah says, "I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling place." Jehovah waits in patience the hour of His intervention, while the impatience of the flesh evinces itself in the unbelieving nation. From all their labours those who have returned to the land doubtless expect a rich harvest, but God has said, "For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks and take away and cut down the branches" (Isaiah 18:5). Alas! instead of receiving blessing from Jehovah, He will intervene in judgment, and "They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains . . . and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon

them." The Arab countries around Palestine would gladly carry out this divine judgment, and God may allow them to do so, if the Lord tarry; but if the Lord comes before that, the judgment will be carried out in the day of Jacob's trouble.

Yet the day of the fulfilment of Moses' prophecy, and of many other prophetic utterances of the Old and New Testaments concerning Israel will assuredly come, even as the Lord Jesus said while on earth, "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" (Matthew 24:31). This notable event follows the appearing of the Lord Jesus, even as we read in Matthew 24:30, "And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

It must not be supposed that all who are dispersed will be brought into blessing in the land; those who are not right in the sight of the Lord will come under judgment. Of this we read in Ezekiel 20:33-44. In Ezekiel 20:34 God says, "I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered." The next verse shows that they do not immediately enter the land, but are brought into the wilderness. There God pleads with them, and there He causes them "To pass under the rod," and "I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me . . . and they shall not enter into the land of Israel."

Those who are in the land before the trumpet sounds for the regathering of the dispersed, will also be sifted, even as it is prophesied in Zechariah 13:8-9. "And it shall come to pass, that in the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein; and I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God." No doubt this judgment for the two thirds, and the refining of the third, will take place when antichrist, the second beast of Revelation 13:11-18, is reigning at Jerusalem, and when the divine judgments are being poured out upon him and those who serve him. The godly remnant, the third of this Scripture, will have suffered bitter persecution from antichrist, which the Lord will use to refine them. Some indeed will suffer martyrdom, and have part in the first resurrection, and have glory with Christ in heaven.

Before the blowing of the trumpets for the regathering of Israel there will be the trumpet call for the sleeping saints, and for those who will join them to meet Christ in the air. Two special revelations were given to the apostle Paul concerning this; the first in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58, where he says, "Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). The other revelation is in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18, "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord . . . For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). When the LORD spoke to Moses concerning this feast, He said, "In the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation." These three things are connected in the words of the LORD, first, a sabbath; secondly, a blowing of trumpets; thirdly, a holy convocation. We have seen, when contemplating the sabbath, that God's rest was in view: so here, God is teaching us that His rest is in view; it is

just about to be introduced, and He is recalling His scattered earthly people that they might enter into that rest, and surround His dwelling place in the Millennium. How blessed for Israel to be gathered together in a holy convocation in the promised land, after the long centuries of scattering among the Gentiles! At this feast Israel are again reminded that their blessings do not proceed from their labours, but from the sacrifice of Christ. All their efforts to establish them-selves in the land will prove abortive; disappointment and judgment will attend their toil and conflicts. If they are to have a sabbath they must learn to "Do no servile work," but to "Offer an offering made by fire to the LORD"; the work has all been done by Christ, alone upon the cross. The Day of Atonement

Closely following on the blowing of trumpets was the day of atonement, of which there are many details in Leviticus 16:1-34. There, the divine instruction is specially for Aaron, and has to do with his approach to God on behalf of the people. Aaron could not enter the holiest at any other time of the year, and when he sprinkled the blood of the sin offering on the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat, he had to put sweet incense upon the fire which was in the censer, so that the cloud of incense covered the mercy seat where Jehovah was in the cloud of glory. Here, God is concerned with the behaviour of His people on that solemn day. Israel's attitude to Christ, and His sacrifice, on their return to the land, after being recalled by the blowing of trumpets, is foreshadowed. This great day is referred to in Hebrews 9:1-28; Hebrews 10:1-39, where the writer notes the contrast between the figure of Christ's sacrifice, and its fulfilment in the death of Jesus. There was no approach for the people into God's presence through the blood of bulls and goats, but through the blood of Jesus we have no more conscience of sins, and are thus perfect as regards our conscience before God; we have been sanctified " Through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once," and we have "Boldness to enter into the holiest."

Three things are connected in Leviticus 23:27; an holy convocation, the afflicting of their souls, and an offering made by fire unto Jehovah. On being regathered, and sifted in the government of God, Israel will afflict their souls on realising that the One who has saved them from the wrath of the nations is none other than Jesus, whom they rejected, crucified and slew. The bitterness of soul that will mark this repentant remnant of Israel is touchingly described in Zechariah 12:1-14, where it is written, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zechariah 12:10).

It was in Jerusalem that the Lord Jesus was condemned, and without its gate He was crucified. Therefore Jerusalem is prominent in the days of repentance, as is also the house of David, for it was in David's city, and prominently by the tribe of Judah that Christ was rejected. At this time also will be the fulfilling of verse 6 of the next chapter, And one shall say unto Him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

Mourning, which begins with the house of David, and with the inhabitants of Jerusalem, will extend to those around, for "The land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart" (Zechariah 12:12-14).

This individual and deep repentance is the fruit of God's own work in the hearts of His people, of His pouring upon them the spirit of grace and supplications. The families of the king, the prophet, the priest and the common people are all involved in this solemn matter, every family, and every individual. When King David slew Uriah the Hittite by the hand of the children of Ammon, "The LORD sent Nathan unto David," to lay the matter on his conscience; but the house of Nathan cannot point the accusing finger now to the house of David and say as Nathan said, "Thou art the man." The feelings expressed by David in Psalms 51:1-19, after Nathan had brought home to him his guilt, will be those of the house of Nathan and the house of David. They will be able to say, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation . . . for Thou desirest not sacrifice . . . the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." This was not the first time that Levi and Simeon had been united in guilt, for in Genesis 49:1-33, Israel had said, "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret: unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united; for in their anger they slew a man." What had marked them at the beginning, comes out in the end. It is not that the house of Simeon was actually united with Judah and Benjamin in the rejection of Christ, but all Israel was represented in these two tribes, and Shimei, or Simeon, who, along with Levi, "Slew a man," is brought forward as the representative of the common people. All were involved in the guilt of Christ's rejection, even as Jehovah held Israel as guilty when Achan had "Taken of the accursed thing." The words of Jehovah were, "Israel hath sinned" (Joshua 7:1-26).

There is a solemn warning in Leviticus 23:29, "For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people." This seems to refer to the ungodly in the land of Israel, the followers of antichrist, of whom we have already spoken, those of whom Zechariah writes, "And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die." God will not have among His people in that day any who have not truly repented.

Another solemn warning comes in Leviticus 23:30, "And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people." In Leviticus 23:28 Jehovah commanded, "Ye shall do no work in that same day," so that those who did work were rebels, disobeying the command of God. It may be that this verse contemplates, or embraces, those spoken of in Ezekiel 20:1-49; "I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me." God will not tolerate self-will among His people; such will not enter into His rest. In considering this chapter, we can readily perceive that God is giving an outline of His ways with Israel, His ancient people, even if some of the great events foretold in these feasts also indicate God's way of blessing for the Christian. The feasts of the seventh month make this very plain, for the blowing of trumpets and the day of atonement are very evidently concerned with the re-gathering of Israel for blessing, and their repentance before God before actually entering into all that God has secured for them through the blood of Jesus.

Yet in these same feasts have we not the way of blessing for the sinner today? Without doubt there is the application of the blowing of trumpets in the sounding out of the Gospel of the grace of God. This good news tells that Jesus has died, "Not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:52). Having heard the word of the Gospel, blessing is received through repentance and faith, even as Paul declared,

"Testifying both to Jews and Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). The Feast of Tabernacles The three last feasts are all close together, and the events they signify will follow in quick succession. After Israel are regathered, and publicly repent for their rejection of their Messiah, the blessing of God immediately pours upon them. This closing feast, like the feast of unleavened bread, occupies a whole week. The seven days of unleavened bread signify the whole course of the Christian's lifetime in this world (1 Corinthians 5:8); the seven days of the feast of tabernacles signify the whole millennial period of blessing for Israel. On the first day of the feast was a holy convocation, for Israel will be gathered around Jehovah's dwelling to celebrate in gladness His ways of mercy and grace; no servile work was to be done, for God's people will assuredly know in that day that all their blessing depends upon the goodness of God and not upon their own efforts. Under the bondage of the law of Sinai, Israel had been endeavouring to obtain blessing on the principle of works, only to bring upon themselves divine judgment, because of their failure and sins; now, under the New Covenant, God is not demanding from them, but pours out His blessing freely through the work of Christ upon the cross.

Each day of the feast brought before God's people the solemn and blessed fact that all the blessing connected with the feast of tabernacles rested on the sacrifice of Christ. We learn from Leviticus 23:37 what "An offering by fire to Jehovah" is. First there is the burnt offering, which tells of the acceptance before God of His saints in all the fragrance and efficacy of Christ's death. Then there is the oblation, which engages us before God with the perfections of His Son, manifested in His holy life on earth. "A sacrifice," is doubtless a peace offering, in which the saints commune with God about His Son, who glorified Him in death, and brought them nigh in righteousness and peace. The offering by fire is completed with "Drink offerings," which, being in the plural, magnify the joy that comes through the work of the cross. The eighth day is ever a new beginning; that of Leviticus 9:1 is evidently the introduction of the millennium; but here, is it not the beginning of a day that is truly new, when even millennial blessing will pass, and make way for blessing that is eternal? In Leviticus 23:39 we read. "On the first day there shall be rest, and on the eighth day there shall be rest." At the beginning of the chapter, God indicated that He had set His heart upon a "Sabbath of rest"; now, at the close, His rest is found, where His people can rest with Him, first, in the millennium, and finally in the eternal state.

Having completed the outline of this final feast, the Spirit of God sums the matter up by saying, "These are the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD" (Leviticus 23:37). This is the third time in the chapter that our attention is drawn to the fact that the feasts are holy convocations (see also Leviticus 23:2 and Leviticus 23:4), in addition to the remarks concerning them when the feasts are detailed (see Leviticus 23:3, Leviticus 23:7-8, Leviticus 23:21, Leviticus 23:24, Leviticus 23:27, Leviticus 23:35 and Leviticus 23:36). How essential it is for the saints to observe the important place their gatherings have in the thoughts of God. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews realised this when he wrote, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is: but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

Further instruction regarding the feast of tabernacles is given in the closing verses of the chapter. In Leviticus 23:39 it is connected with the ingathering of the fruit of the land. What a day will that be when, regathered to their own promised land, Israel will enjoy God's bountiful provision, feeding on the produce of a land from which the curse has been removed, and resting before God in the

knowledge of His goodness. But Israel are not only to rest; they are to rejoice before the LORD during the whole period of the feast, that is for the whole Millennial age. Their joy is connected with the trees with which they celebrate the feast, and with which they doubtless made their booths in which to dwell. Their dwellings were to be made of goodly or beautiful trees. It was thus that God ever beheld the abodes of His people, for Balaam, beholding them with "The vision of the Almighty," was compelled to say, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" (Numbers 24:4-5). The fragrance and beauty that marked the dwellings of God's people of old in this gladsome feast will assuredly characterize them in the coming day. And should not the assemblies of God have the same features now? What moral beauty should mark the comings together of the saints! Such gatherings are not for the display of the flesh or anything that belongs to the natural man, but for the setting forth of the beautiful traits of Christ.

Palm branches are specially named, and this tree is connected with righteousness in Scripture, for we read in Jeremiah 10:5, "They are upright as the palm tree," and in Psalms 92:12, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree." During the reign of Christ on earth, righteousness will prevail; it will not only be manifest in all the dwellings of Israel, but will pervade the whole kingdom of the Son of Man. The world is not marked by righteousness today; but righteousness is to mark the people of God in all their ways, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). If righteousness is not found in the assembly today, where else on earth will it be found? Every judgment that is formed and pronounced, and every action, should bear the upright feature of the palm tree. The walls and doors of Solomon's temple were carved with palm trees, and these will also be carved in the temple of the coming day, as recorded in Ezekiel 40:1-49; Ezekiel 41:1-26 The boughs of thick or leafy trees formed part of the tabernacles of Israel. Thickness portrays strength, and leafy trees afford shade and comfort. Our strength comes from God, we are to be "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power" (Colossians 1:11). Moral strength comes through communion with God, by feeding upon Christ through His word. The assembly should be a place where saints find shelter and comfort; where they are made strong in divine grace, the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Although the Israelites in captivity hung their harps on the willows, this tree does not necessarily speak of sorrow, for in Isaiah 44:1-28 we read, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine off-spring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses" (Isaiah 44:3-4). Here the willow is taken to symbolize prosperity that comes from God's blessing. What blessing will come to God's earthly people in the days foretold in this chapter, and in the passage quoted from Isaiah! And should not the blessing of God be found in the church now? Indeed, the assembly is the place where the blessings and privileges of God's providing are known and enjoyed as no-where else. The feast of tabernacles was pre-eminently a time of rejoicing, but the only time we actually read of its celebration in the Old Testament is in Ezra 3:4, after the remnant had returned from captivity. There was no true joy for those held in bondage under the law; but under the New Covenant Israel will truly rejoice when restored to their land, and dwelling securely before Jehovah in rest and peace. In the New Testament, it is recorded, "Now the Jew's feast of tabernacles was at hand" (John 7:2). Because of the low moral state of the people, the feast had lost its character as a feast of Jehovah, and had degenerated into a feast of the Jews. How could there be real joy in the hearts of those who sought the life of

the Son of God, and called Him a devil? Yet in the midst of such a scene, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

Those who believe in the Son of God receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, of which He speaks in this Scripture, and by the Spirit can enter into deeper joys than ever Israel will know on earth. Of this joy we read in John 15:1-27, where the Lord Jesus says, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Although the feast of tabernacles looks on to the joys of the coming day, Israel were to remember, while dwelling in their booths, all that God had done for them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. In the midst of their joy they were to consider the beginning of God's ways with them; how He had brought them from under the bondage of Egypt, and given them rest before Him, not in the stable dwellings of the land, but as strangers, passing on to the place where they should rest with Him in abiding joy. And is it not thus with us? In Ephesians 2:1-22 : after speaking of the exceeding riches of God's grace, which will soon be displayed in those He has quickened, and made to sit down together in Christ in the heavenly places, it is written "Wherefore remember." We are not to forget the beginning of God's dealings with us while enjoying the fruits of His grace.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Golden Lampstands.

The Golden Lampstands.

No. 1.

Leviticus 24:1-4; Revelation 1:1-20; Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22; Zechariah 4:1-14.

Christ is presented to us by the Spirit of God in these Scriptures in offices and ministry in which He secures the will and pleasure of God. In the first Scripture we see in type the Lord Jesus procuring in divine grace His own precious features in the lives of His saints. The second Scripture deals with divine government in the assembly, in relation to its place of responsibility as a light-bearer before the world. The third Scripture unfolds the display of divine glory in Christ as King and Priest in the world to come. The olive oil, which God commanded the children of Israel to bring to Moses, to cause the lamps to burn continually, is a well-known symbol of the Spirit of God. There would be nothing in this world for God at the present time if the Holy Spirit was not here; and every bit of light that shines in the lives of the saints, both for the pleasure of God, and for testimony to the world, is the fruit of the Spirit's work in the hearts of the saints of God. The Holy Spirit has come from the exalted Son of God in heaven to maintain in the lives of God's people the same blessed features of divine life that were manifested in their perfection in Jesus as Man here below. This holy, heavenly life, in which God finds pleasure, is the light that shines for the glory of God. In His closing testimony to the world, recorded for us in John 12:1-50, the Lord Jesus said, "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the sons of light" (John 12:36). Only the sons of light can live for God's pleasure in the midst of a world that knows Him not.

Even as the children of Israel had to beat the olives to procure the oil for the light, so have the saints of God now to be in exercise of soul before God, so that they might by the Spirit produce in their lives the features of Christ. Spiritual exercises are the fruit of the Spirit's work, but they bring out in the saints of God the traits of beauty that belong to Jesus, those of which we read in Galatians 5:22-23, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Three times over in these verses we find that God would have the light of the lamps to shine continually. A spasmodic testimony will not do for God: it must not be interrupted. He must have constantly before Him the beautiful features of Christ that gave Him unbroken pleasures when His Son was here. The seven lamps which rested on the seven branches of the beautiful candlestick, or lampstand, shed their light upon the lampstand within the Holy Place. Those without never saw the light of the lamps strike upon the varied features of the lampstand. It was not to attract Israel, or any of the nations that might be near at hand, that the lamps shone; nor was it to illumine the path of any through the darkness of the world. The priests who ministered within the Holy Place would indeed walk in the light of the lamps, but the object of the shining was God Himself. It was for God's pleasure that the lamps shone: the light was to be maintained "Before Jehovah continually."

God's people are a testimony to the world, even as it is written in Php 2:15, "That ye may be harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; among whom ye appear as lights in the world." But it is not this aspect of the truth that is brought out in the light shining within the Holy Place. In this aspect we are to learn of the pleasure of God in securing through the present ministry of Christ the expression of the heavenly life in His saints while passing through the world. In each branch of the lampstand there were formed in its construction the characteristic features of an almond tree, namely, its buds, flowers and fruit (see Exodus 37:17-22). These no doubt remind us of the varied expressions of life; the evidences of it in the buds, its beauty and fragrance in the blossom, and its mature results in the fruit. The pure light of the lamps brought out all these features as it fell upon the beautiful lamp-stand. There was not a single feature on the lampstand that did not bring out something of Christ. Do we not see in Christ's own life these varied expressions? When only twelve years old, there was the evidence of a life that was only concerned with the will of God when He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" At the waters of baptism the Father's voice from heaven proclaimed the beauty and fragrance that were for Himself in the secret life of Jesus, when He said, "Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." And did not His holy life bring forth fruit for the glory of God? There is coming the day that will display the fruit of His life of service for God's pleasure, and also the fruit of His great work upon the cross. And how delightful it is to the Father to view in His people that which His own Spirit produces, the same lovely traits that were displayed in all their perfection and profusion in the Man Christ Jesus. The sweet fragrance of constant obedience and unswerving fidelity to His will, ascended to the Father from every inward and outward movement of His Son in this world. Some-thing of this same fragrance is produced in those who "through sanctification of the Spirit" are called to walk in the same path of obedience, the obedience of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:2). But not only is there fragrance for God in the lives of His people, there is also fruit, even as the Lord said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8).

Aaron, Jehovah's priest, was to dress the lampstand, from the evening to morning, before Jehovah continually. This surely typifies the priestly office and service of the Lord Jesus who, as the Minister of the Sanctuary, has various functions in His present service on high. As our Great High Priest, with our names upon His shoulders and upon His breast, He ministers succour and comfort to His saints, bringing relief in grace and mercy as they pass through the wilderness. He saves to the uttermost those who come to God by Him, and He leads His own as a worshipping company into the presence of God, and sings praises to God in the midst of the assembly. There is also the service for Israel, for He maintains their place before God, as signified by the twelve loaves on the table of showbread.

Added to the services mentioned there is the maintenance of the light on the lampstand. The dressing of the lamps would involve the use of the snuffers of pure gold, for the removal of anything that obscured the clear shining of the light or that impeded the flow of the olive oil to sustain the light. We have but a feeble apprehension of the watchful, gracious ministry of Christ, as He deals so gently, yet firmly with His own, for the removal of all in us and about us that is inconsistent with His own character, with all that belongs to the flesh, so that God might have pleasure in our walk and ways.

Throughout the night, from "evening to morning," this ministry continued. So has it been during the long night of the Lord's absence from this world, and it will continue until He comes to take His own to be forever with Him. During the "Dark Ages," there may have been little of Christ discernible to the eye of man, for the professing church was steeped in ignorance and superstition. But we may rest assured that in spite of all human failure that the faithful Minister of the Sanctuary maintained the light in the Holy Place for the eye and heart of God. Simple hymns that remain from the church's darkest days, in which there is the evidence of deep devotion to Christ, is the clearest witness to the untiring service of Him who has dressed the lamps from the evening of His leaving this world.

Christ's present ministry is "before Jehovah." The men of this world know not that the One they crucified and slew is alive in heaven, carrying on a great work before God for His glory in relation to those who, like their Master, are rejected and despised. The Son has set Himself apart to glorify the Father in His present work even as He did while on the earth. Not only had Aaron to dress the lamps; he had to "arrange the lamps" upon the pure candlestick, before Jehovah continually. Each lamp would be placed by Aaron on the branch, and in the position, where it would best shine upon the lovely workmanship of the candlestick. And how perfect is the wisdom that arranges all the circumstances and conditions of our life, so that we might display before God the character of Christ. We naturally desire to choose our own circumstances, thinking, even if we would refrain from saying so, that we could choose what is best. We may even deceive ourselves in thinking that we are choosing what will best serve God's will for us, and all the while have self as the motive of the heart.

We may view the lamps as symbolizing Christians in their individual lives, or as little gatherings of the saints which act according to the truth of the assembly, though they would not claim in days of brokenness and failure to be the local assembly. The Lord in His wisdom and grace orders the lives of His own, and deals with them, even as the priest of old both dressed and arranged the lamps in the presence of God. It is God's will and pleasure that actuates Christ in all His ways with us; but we may rest assured that what secures the Father's pleasure will be for our greatest good and abiding blessing.

Christ may choose for us some place that is not naturally attractive or congenial, some place in which to live or to work that we would never have chosen for ourselves; but if Christ has made the choice for us we can rest content that His choice is infinitely better than ours could ever have been. It is in that town or place in the country, and in that position, that He knows we can best serve the will and pleasure of God. So it is too in relation to the assembly. We have no hand in choosing those who are to be with us in the local assembly: we may not have much to do with the trials and exercises of the assembly, and yet have to share in the sorrows as well as the benefits these exercises produce. Our hearts may ever rest content if we realise that all is ordered and watched over by One who loves us, and who is ever concerned with bringing out in the saints the lovely features that He manifested while walking for God's pleasure as Man on earth. This was given to Israel as "an everlasting statute" throughout their generations: it was to be an unflinching service to God. Alas! in the days of Eli, it is recorded, "the lamp of God went out" (1 Samuel 3:3); evincing Israel's failure. But there is no failure with our Great High Priest. So long as He waits in patience the day of His coming to take His own to be for ever with Him, so long will He maintain the shining of the lamps for the pleasure of His God and Father.

How rich the character He bears, And all the form of love He wears, Exalted on the throne; In songs of sweet untiring praise, We e'er would sing His perfect ways, And make His glories known.

No. 2 The Seven Lampstands of Revelation

We are not left in any doubt as to what the seven lampstands of Revelation represent, for we read in Revelation 1:20, "the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." These seven Asiatic gatherings had been highly favoured, being enriched with the ministry of the Apostle Paul, and being watched over by him. Bereft of the care of the apostle, who was now at home with Christ, the Lord reveals that He still cares for them, and is jealous of their affections. No spiritually-minded saint of God can fail to discern that the addresses to the seven churches of Asia give a prophetic history of the church in its responsible witness for Christ, from the time it left its first love until it is spued as nauseous out of the mouth of Christ. The church is viewed here in quite a different way from that which we have considered in Leviticus 24:1-23. We are not contemplating now companies of true believers, manifesting by the Spirit of God the life of Jesus for the pleasure of God under the gracious ministry of Christ, our Great High Priest; but we are beholding the Lord Jesus scrutinizing the professing church in its responsibility to represent Him before the world.

Since the church is viewed in its responsibility, it is not difficult to understand why Christ is presented in His judicial character as "like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet," with His affections restrained in divine righteousness, His eyes searching, in penetrating judgment, to discover and deal with all that is inconsistent with the holiness of God, and testing all according to God's righteous requirements from man set up in responsibility before Him in this world. Nor are we left in any doubt as to the glory of the Person who watches governmentally over the state and activities of the professing church. He is seen as Daniel saw Him, the Ancient of Days, with "His head and His hairs white like wool, as white as snow . . . and His countenance was as the sun, shineth in his strength" (Revelation 1:14-16). It is little wonder that His glorious appearance, and the sound of His mighty voice of power, brought the disciple, who once lay in His bosom, as dead at His feet. In Revelation 2:1-29 and Revelation 3:1-22 the Lord is seen walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, surveying all, nothing hidden from His searching gaze, noticing what is worthy of His approbation, and laying His finger upon that which is inconsistent with the moral attributes of Him who has set the assembly to be a light-bearer in the world. The angel, that is the responsible element in the church, is first addressed, the Lord presenting Him-self in His official character, moral excellence or in His Personal glory; each presentation being apposite to the state or characteristics of the particular assembly to which He speaks. To Ephesus the Lord introduces Himself as the One who holds the seven responsible witnesses in His right hand of power. All the stars are His; the power of His right hand is available to sustain them in their place of testimony; and He can dispose of them at His pleasure. As He walks in the midst of the assemblies He views all in relation to the glory of God, assessing with accurate knowledge and divine wisdom, and describing with precision every feature to which He draws attention. In divine righteousness He commends what is worthy of approbation, and there was much at Ephesus that He approved; yet to the anointed ear some of the things of which the Lord takes cognisance are spoken of in such a way as to disclose inherent weakness in what is commended. He speaks of knowing their "works": but He does not say they were works "of faith," as were those of the saints at Thessalonica. The works were in evidence, but they did not spring

from the faith that was so strong and fresh in the young assembly at Thessalonica. Of their "labour," and their "endurance," the Lord also is aware; but the springs of "love" and "hope" that were at the source of the labour and the endurance of the Thessalonian saints are not found here (see 1 Thessalonians 1:3). The searching gaze of the Lord penetrates right down to the inner springs of the soul that give character and energy to every action, and He faithfully exposes in love, yet firmly, when the action is divorced from the spring that can alone give spiritual vigour and tone to our activities.

There were other things at Ephesus that the Lord commended, things that are sadly lacking in other assemblies: indeed, it might be difficult for us to discover any deficiency in the outward marks of watchfulness, zeal and energy. But the searcher of hearts saw what others could not see, that in spite of all the remarkable features that evinced fidelity to an absent Lover, there had been departure from the pristine affection that had given Him a dwelling-place in the heart of the assembly.

All that is done for the Lord He greatly values, and nothing escapes His eye, and nothing will go unrewarded; but what He values above all is to be enshrined in the affections of His own. What proceeds from first-love gives unqualified pleasure to the heart of the blessed Lord; and first-love is that single-hearted devotion that refuses to share Christ's place in the heart with any other. The Lord has nothing wherewith to reproach the assembly at Smyrna, but much to say to them by way of encouragement. They were passing through tribulation, which no doubt kept them close to the side of Christ, and purged them from the dross of this poor world. Poor in this world's good, they were rich in things spiritual and eternal; for has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith. They were railed at by the religious men of this world, and some were about to be faced with the rage of Satan, appearing as a roaring lion. All is seen and foreseen by the Lord who can exhort them to be faithful, and who encourages them with the promise of "the crown of life." When the church was freed from tribulation and from the fires of persecution, it was seduced by the patronage of the world. This is seen in Pergamos, to which the Lord presents Himself as having "the sharp two-edged sword"; that which penetrates to the separating of soul and spirit, and which discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. There were things to commend at Pergamos even though the church was in the world, and the world in the church. There were those the Lord could take account of as holding fast His Name, and not denying His faith, in the face of the determined onslaught of the enemy. But the Lord had against them that there were those in the bosom of the assembly who taught evil doctrines, which counselled association with an evil world, and which set aside the life of holiness consistent with the reception of divine grace.

How searching is the gaze, and how firm the tread of Him who looks upon Thyatira. He announces to this assembly that He is the Son of God, the One whose glory is not to be given to others. There was much to commend, but His eye rested with disapprobation on "the woman Jezebel," whose presence and teaching was permitted in their midst. The false teachings, idolatry and corruption of the Papacy are not hid from His eye; and in stern tones He pronounces His judgment on this false and wicked system that has so grossly misrepresented Him to the world. Yet His eye takes account of the little, faithful remnant, that seeks to be loyal to Him amidst the general departure, and He encourages them to "hold fast" what they had, and gives them the promise of His coming. The assembly at Sardis shows us the state of the church after the energy and faithfulness that marked the Reformers had given place to dead formality. To this assembly the Lord shows Himself

as the One "that has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars." There is not much to commend, but the Lord notices their works. Protestantism had stood against the evils of the Papacy, and had destroyed much of the idolatry and corruption connected with that wicked system. But their early faithfulness was gone, it lived only in name, for the system was characterised by the lack of spiritual life and energy. How appropriate that the Lord should sneak of Himself as having the "seven Spirits of God," for in Protestantism, as in Romanism, there is little room for the Spirit of God. The Lord calls for repentance, and threatens to come upon the church as upon the world," as a thief." But there were those who walked for Christ's pleasure, "A few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy." As with Smyrna, the Lord has no word of reproach for the church at Philadelphia. There was not the persecution to drive them to the side of Christ, but there was the attraction of the Person of "The Holy, the True; He that has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one shall open." They had only a little power, yet as kept near to Christ, they had kept His Word and had not denied His Name. Unrecognised by the great religious profession, they waited for the coming of the Lord, when it would be manifested that they were loved by Him. They were content to share the reproach of Christ, having respect for the recompense of the reward.

If the church has grievously failed in its testimony for Christ in this world, the testimony of God is secure in Him who presented Himself to the church at Laodicea as "The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the beginning of the creation of God." There is nothing in this boasting, self-sufficient church to commend. Its condition is so distasteful to Christ that He is about to spue it out of His mouth. It is so self-complacent in its false confidence, and so occupied with its imagined riches, that it has no place for Christ; He is outside its door, and knocking. This is the professing church as we see it today Occupied with the things of the present world, it has no room for Christ. There is boasting of their traditions, philosophy, rich music, grand buildings, and much beside; but they are utterly insensible as to their spiritual blindness and poverty.

How very solemn it is to contemplate this prophetic history of the church in responsibility; and more especially as we trace the accurate fulfilment of it down the ages. Yet how blessed it is to know that however great may be the church's failure, the Lord will assuredly carry out the purposes and counsels of God for the blessing of His own, securing, in spite of all the failure, the glory and pleasure of God. In the midst of all the ruin, down the ages, God has been working in new creation for His own satisfaction; and until the Lord comes we can seek to be faithful, walking in the light of that which can never break down, and seeking in confessed weakness to keep His Word and not deny His Name.

No. 3 The Golden Lampstand of Zechariah

We have observed in the service of Aaron within the Holy Place of the Tabernacle that which typifies the present ministry of Christ in the presence of God. In his dressing and arranging the lamps on the pure lampstand we learn of His maintaining that which is for God's pleasure in the lives of His own. In Revelation the scene is quite different, for there the Lord as Son of Man walks in the midst of the assemblies set up in responsible witness for God in this world, and He watches over all that is transpiring, dealing in faithfulness and righteousness with what is inconsistent with the nature and character of God. This vision of Zechariah, though given for the benefit of the

remnant of Israel in his day, looks forward to the time when Christ will be seen in His glory in this world. When Zechariah saw the golden lampstand with its seven lamps he must have been reminded of the lamp-stands in the Tabernacle and in Solomon's Temple.

Although the glory had long since departed from the dwelling place of God on earth, and the light of the lamps had been put out, God had not given up His people, nor was it His intention to allow the present conditions to continue for ever: the day would assuredly come when the light of God would again shine out, even as it was still maintained before His eye, as is seen by the prophet in the vision. In Leviticus 24:1-23, Jehovah had instructed Israel to provide oil for the lamps, but in this vision the golden oil is not procured through the efforts of God's people; it flows directly from the two olive trees through the two golden tubes into the golden bowl of the lampstand, and the seven pipes carry the precious oil from the bowl to the seven lamps. There is no thought of the responsibility of man, as in Revelation; nor is there any indication that man is used as an instrument to provide the light for the pleasure of God, as in Leviticus 24:1-23. It is the sovereign action of God in every part. The vision is given in Zechariah 4:2-3, and the explanation in the closing verses, and between these sections the prophet discloses Jehovah's reason for giving the vision to him. The prophet has to confess that he has no knowledge of what the vision meant, but the angel answered that it was "The word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts."

Long before Cyrus, the king of Persia, had been born, it had been written by the prophet, "Thus saith Jehovah . . . that saith Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith Jehovah to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him" (Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1). When the time came, according to the word of the prophet, "Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, and he made a proclamation throughout his kingdom. and also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth has Jehovah the God of the heavens given to me, and He has charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all His people, Jehovah his God be with him, and let him go up" (2 Chronicles 36:22-23).

About fifty thousand answered the call of Cyrus, and returned to the land under the leadership of Zerubbabel, and in the second year of their return they laid the foundation of the House of Jehovah. For some time the work continued, in spite of considerable opposition from those around, but in the reign of Artaxerxes the work, by order of the king, ceased altogether. There seems little doubt that it was not only the opposition that caused the work to cease: the builders had lost sight of God, whose work they were doing, and they had their eyes upon the obstacles rather than upon Jehovah their God.

It was for this reason the vision had been given to Zechariah. In it there was a message of God for Zerubbabel and the returned remnant. God would have them to understand that for the accomplishment of His will He did not require the might of armies, or the power of man: all would be carried to a successful end by His Spirit. In the vision the whole process of sustaining the divine light on the golden candlestick was entirely independent of man; it depended only on the Spirit of God. What an important message it was for the returned remnant; and it is just as important for us today. There is an aspect of the truth in which God uses human instruments for the carrying out of

His will: but He would have us to realise that whatever divine work is to be done can only be done for His pleasure by the working of His Holy Spirit. The king of Persia, who had commanded the work to cease, might appear as a great mountain, an insurmountable obstacle before God's people, but He says to them for their encouragement. "Who art thou. O great mountain? before Zerubbabel (thou dost become) a plain." Later, when on earth, the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Have faith in God; for verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and he thou cast into the sea: and shall not doubt in his heart . . . he shall have whatsoever he saith" (Mark 11:22-23). When faith rests its eye on God, the great mountain becomes a plain.

Already the foundations of the temple had been laid, but Zerubbabel had not yet set up the headstone; Jehovah had determined that he would do this, and encourages him and His people by sending this message. The bringing forth of the headstone was to be an occasion of rejoicing, which they would celebrate with the cry, "Grace, grace unto it!" It was not the headstone of a material building that was before the mind of the Spirit of God in the writing of this Scripture, but rather the Stone that was set at naught of Israel's builders, when He came as Man into the world, and who has become in Jehovah's building the Head of the Corner. Of the Stone, Jehovah had said to Joshua, the high priest, and to his fellows, through the prophet, "For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua — upon one stone are seven eyes; behold I will engrave the graving thereof, saith Jehovah of hosts" (Zechariah 3:9). In this divine Stone there is the perfection of discernment and wisdom; and there is engraved on it all the mind and will of God. This is the Stone in which there is every grace. the One in whom there is the perfection of beauty, every feature for the pleasure of God, and to attract and hold the eyes and hearts of His saints. Christ already is seen as the Chief Corner Stone in relation to the Assembly: He will soon be displayed as the Head and Centre of all God's schemes for earth and heaven.

God also decreed that "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; and his hands shall finish it." No amount of opposition by the great of this world can frustrate what God has set Himself to do. It may be a "day of small things," which God's people are inclined to despise; but the faithful will discern that the outward appearance does not manifest the true value of the work of God. The faithful remnant of that day would rejoice to see the building instruments afresh in the hands of Zerubbabel, even as the saints of God in this day see by faith the Lord Jesus building that against which no power of man or Satan can prevail.

Nothing is hidden from the eyes of God, for "the eyes of Jehovah run to and fro in the whole earth," and it should be of immense comfort to His people that He is constantly watching over all that is taking place in this world, and orders all for His own glory and the prosperity of His people. The faithful remnant is here identified in their rejoicing with the seven eyes of Jehovah, the activities of His Spirit, in relation to the accomplishing of His will.

What seems specially to interest the prophet is the identity of "these two olive trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left," for he asks the second time, "What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden tubes that empty the gold out of them-selves?" When the prophet confesses that he does not know the answer to his question, the angel says, "These are the two sons of oil, that stand before the Lord of the whole earth:" the two branches have the same character as the two olive trees.

All God's thoughts for the blessing of His earthly people will be secured by the "two sons of oil," by the One who is Anointed Priest and Anointed King. Alas! in the days of the prophet there was much to discourage. Zerubbabel was the direct heir from David to the throne of Israel, but he was not the anointed king. Joshua was the high priest of Israel, but how miserable was his state as depicted in Zechariah 3:1-14. But the day is surely coming when the kingdom and the priesthood will be taken up by Him in whom there is no failure, and when through Him the light of the glory of God will shine from the holy city, Jerusalem, for the blessing of Israel and the illumination of the world.

Christ's two offices are typified in Zerubbabel and Joshua, but in Zechariah 6:1-15 the Spirit of God reveals to the prophet that Christ in the day to come "shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zechariah 6:13). No other but Jesus is worthy to bear the glory of the coming kingdom, and only by the work of His cross could there be the counsel of peace between Jehovah and the Priest upon His throne. In vision the prophet saw the golden tubes convey the gold from the olive trees to the golden bowl. What a wonderful day is in prospect for the nation of Israel, when the divine glory shines out from the shrine into which the Lord Jesus as the True Son of David has entered. There will be the fulfilment of the words of Isaiah, who wrote, "Behold a King shall reign in righteousness" (Isaiah 32:1). The gold, the divine righteousness, will outpour from Christ, both as King and Priest, "and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever" (Isaiah 32:17).

All the gold from the olive trees was emptied first into the golden bowl at the top of the lampstand, thus directing our eyes to the vessel of the divine glory, to Him who in His own Person is the expression of divine righteousness and divine glory. So that we are not only privileged to behold the Lord Jesus in the offices He fills for the accomplishment of God's will, but to gaze upon Him in the glory of His Person as the Son of God. In Revelation 4:5 we read of "seven lamps of fire, which are the seven Spirits of God," and these speak of the activities and operations of the Holy Spirit in His varied characters in the coming day. So here it would seem that the seven pipes and the seven lamps bring out the work of the Spirit of God, as bringing from the glorified Christ that which displays the glory of His kingdom in the Millennium, when Jesus as "the two sons of oil" stands as the admired object of His own "before the Lord of the whole earth."

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Gospel Preached by Paul

The Gospel Preached by Paul When he wrote to the saints of Galatia the Apostle Paul was careful to observe that the Gospel he preached was given to him "by revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:12). He had not received what he preached from any of the twelve apostles, nor did any man teach him, but God had separated him from his mother's womb, to reveal His Son in him that he might preach Him as Glad Tidings among the nations (Galatians 1:12, Galatians 1:15-16). Fundamentally and essentially the Gospel that Paul preached was that preached by Peter and the other apostles, but it had its own peculiar revelations and features, so that Paul could speak of "my Gospel." It was Paul's Gospel because he received it directly from the Lord by divine revelation. Paul had a double ministry, and wrote of himself as minister of the Gospel and minister of the church (Colossians 1:23-25). Let us consider briefly some of the features of Paul's Gospel. The Gospel of the Grace of God

Speaking to the elders of Ephesus, Paul said that he desired to finish his course, and the ministry that he had received from the Lord Jesus, "to testify the Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). The Apostle had learned in the Lord's dealings with him how rich God's grace is, and was eminently suited to make it known to others. The rich grace of God that had taken all his sins away, and brought him into God's favour, was the grace available for the blessing of all who would trust in the Son of God whom Paul preached. To Jews and Greeks the Apostle preached the same message, showing that the way into divine blessing was by "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

Included in Paul's message was "preaching the kingdom of God" (Acts 20:25), and the declaration of "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Those who accepted the word of divine grace came under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, being translated into the "kingdom of God's dear Son," and from Him learning of all that God had in store for the blessing of His own, according to His counsel of eternal love. The counsel of God brings before us the wonderful truths of "the riches of His grace," and "the glory of His grace," and all these wondrous things are part of the Gospel of the grace of God. The Gospel of God Concerning His Son The Epistle to the Romans expounds to us God's Gospel, and is written by Paul as the minister of the Gospel. If Paul can speak of it as "my Gospel" (Romans 16:25), as being specially entrusted with its preaching, he leaves us in no doubt as to the source and subject of the Gospel, for he writes of it as "the Gospel of God," and "concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 1:1; Romans 1:3). God is the source of the Gospel, and His Son is its subject. Paul tells us that the Gospel is God's power to salvation to every one who believes, and that in the Gospel "the righteousness of God" is revealed "from faith to faith" (Romans 1:16-17).

Until Romans 5:11 Paul writes of how God has dealt with the question of our sins, and has justified us by faith on the ground of redemption, and of how we now stand in God's favour, rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us, and that we now joy in God who has reconciled us to Himself. After Romans 5:11 Paul

shows us how God has dealt with the sin that is in our nature, setting us free from the power of sin so that we might serve Him. We are no longer viewed as being in Adam, but as being "in Christ," where there is no condemnation. Nor are we "in the flesh," although the flesh is in us, but we are "in the Spirit," and we have the Holy Spirit as our life, as the Spirit of sonship, and as the power to live for God's will and pleasure. As God's sons and His children we are looking for our part with Christ, to share all things with Him, and while in a groaning creation "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." God foreknew us before we had any being, and He predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son, and soon we shall be with Christ where He is "the Firstborn among many brethren." While waiting for that day, God is for us, and Christ, at the right hand of God, also maketh intercession for us.

Special Revelations of Paul's Gospel

After writing in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 of the Gospel that he preached to the saints there, Paul wrote, "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51). This is one of the peculiar revelations of Paul's Gospel. At the resurrection of the sleeping saints, when the Lord Jesus comes for His own, the saints who are alive will not pass through death, but will be changed. The earlier verses deal with the resurrection of the just, but this revelation tells that the living saints will put on an incorruptible body, and what is mortal will put on immortality. Earlier, in 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, there are also wonderful revelations concerning Christ's coming kingdom and the eternal state.

Another blessed revelation of Paul's Gospel is the rapture of the church to heaven, as given in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. We have already seen in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 that when the dead in Christ are raised, the living saints shall be changed. Now we learn that when this great change takes place the Lord will take the saints to heaven. The Lord will come with an assembling shout, gathering His saints together before taking them away. The "voice of the archangel" may be to announce to the angels that their present ministry towards the saints, the heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14), is now completed. The Gospel of the Glory of Christ In contemplating that in preaching Christ's Gospel the servants of the Lord were "the savour of death unto death; and . . . the savour of life unto life," Paul wrote, "And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Corinthians 2:16), but he could add, "our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us ministers of the new covenant" (2 Corinthians 3:5-6). The new covenant will be made with Israel in the coming day, but the spirit of the new covenant is now ministered in the Gospel, and for us it is a ministry of righteousness and a ministry of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:8-9). The glory of the new covenant dims the glory of the old, and we now see the glory in the unveiled face of the Lord, and it is our privilege to be occupied with His glory. The Gospel that tells us of the glory of the new covenant, and the glory of the Lord, also tells us of the glory "of Christ, who is the image of God," and of the "glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:4-7). All God's thoughts are to be learned in the last Adam, glorified at God's right hand; and in Him we see the glory that God has acquired by His death on the cross, and the glory that shows what God's thoughts are of the One who glorified Him in life and in death.

2 Corinthians 5:1-21 reveals that all will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Christians will not be judged there, but will receive the things done in the body, learning Christ's mind on our whole course in this world. Then we shall be like Him, having "our house which is from heaven" (2

Corinthians 5:2; 2 Corinthians 5:10). How blessed is the knowledge that we are now in new creation as being "in Christ," and that we are reconciled to God by Jesus Christ, and are God's righteousness in Him. The Gospel of Christ's Unsearchable Riches The divine glories of the Son are brought before us in Isaiah 9:6, in John's Gospel, and in many other Scriptures, but Paul had the privilege of making known in his Gospel the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8), the glories and riches that belong to Christ as the Man of God's counsels, according to the truth of the mystery. Such Scriptures as Psalms 8:1-9 foretold the place the Son of Man would have in the coming day, but it was not until Christ had been glorified that the Spirit of God brought forth the wondrous tidings, through Paul, of the relationship of the church to Christ as His body and His bride, and of the place that the believing Jew and the believing Gentile would share in association with a heavenly Christ.

How great are Christ's riches as the Head over all things, all the resources of the vast universe being His, and from what is His He will supply all that is needed to carry out God's will in the coming ages. Even now the saints are sustained from Christ's great resources, even as Paul wrote, "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Php 4:19). "The mystery of the Gospel" (Ephesians 6:19), which Paul desired to make known, brings Christ before us according to the eternal purpose of God as the Man of His right hand. The Gospel of the Blessed God

We have seen that the Gospel of the glory of Christ as the image of God is spoken of by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:1-18, but to Timothy the Apostle writes of "the glad tidings of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted" (1 Timothy 1:11). God's glory is set forth in the Gospel, a Gospel that makes Him known in His nature of love, in His holiness and righteousness, and in His compassion towards men. All that man is naturally in sin is the very antithesis of what the blessed God is as made known in the Gospel. The moral glory of God has been seen perfectly in the perfections of Jesus in Manhood in this world, and in Him where He is in God's presence now. Is it not surpassing wonderful that such a God should take up a man like Saul of Tarsus and entrust him with such a Gospel? Paul thought this himself, for he had been "before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," and the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:13-15). If God could act in this way with the chief of sinners it showed that His grace and mercy were available to all, and that divine blessing would be the portion of all who trusted the Christ of God.

Life and Incorruptibility

Timothy was exhorted by Paul, "Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8), keeping in mind that God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling . . . according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." This divine grace was manifested in Christ in Manhood, who though His entry into death has abolished death, and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the Gospel.

While on earth the Son of God could say, "I am . . . the life" (John 14:6), but in His death He made life available for us, and this is proclaimed in the Gospel. Our Saviour went into death to secure God's glory and our blessing, but He also annulled death, breaking its power, and robbing it of its sting. Coming out of death, the risen Son of God said to His disciples, as He breathed on them, "Receive Holy Spirit" (John 20:22), the last Adam communicating to His own a new life, the life that

is brought to light by the Gospel. When the Lord Jesus comes for His own, as we have seen in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 and 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18, He will give them bodies of glory like His own body of glory (Php 3:21), but we already are in the light of this through the proclamation of the Gospel.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Headship of Christ.

The Headship of Christ. The subject of headship is found in both Old and New Testaments. Shortly before David's decease he addressed a great congregation of princes, captains, and other notables of his kingdom, speaking to them of his preparation for the building of the house of God. Turning to bless Jehovah he says, "Thine, Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the splendour, and the majesty . . . Thou art exalted as HEAD ABOVE ALL; and riches and glory are of Thee, and Thou rulest over everything; and in Thy hand is power and might . . . we thank Thee and praise Thy glorious name" (1 Chronicles 19:11-13). This remarkable paean of praise delineates what the Spirit of God connects with the position of headship — greatness, glory, majesty, riches, might, power and splendour. These things belong to God as Head above all, and bring before us what God is as supremely and infinitely above all He has created; but these same things very blessedly describe what belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ in the position of headship that God has given to Him. In Israel there were "heads of the people," holding positions of trust and authority under Moses, the king in Jesurun (Deuteronomy 33:5; Deuteronomy 33:21). Israel's king, according to the words of Samuel, was "The head of the tribes of Israel" (1 Samuel 15:17); and in the coming day "the children of Judah and the children of Israel . . . shall appoint themselves one head" (Hosea 1:11). David, in his song of deliverance to Jehovah says, "Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; Thou hast made me the head of the nations" (Psalms 18:43). Christ's headship in the millennial age will embrace both Israel and the nations, for then He will be displayed as Head over all things.

Two Heads — Adam and Christ. The writings of the Apostle Paul bring the headship of Christ before us in the New Testament. Although the word head is not used, in the fifth chapter of Romans there is a very striking contrast between Adam and Christ; Adam, the head of a race derived from him after his fall; Christ — of whom Adam was a figure — head of a race that inherits rich and abiding blessings through His work on the cross. Through Adam's fall, the reign of sin and death began, and all born of him are constituted sinners, receiving, because of sin, judgment, condemnation and death. In blessed contrast, those who are under Christ's headship are constituted righteous, having justification of life, receiving the free gift of righteousness through grace, and have the prospect of reigning in life with Christ in the coming day. The reign of grace, which belongs to the present period of time, has come through our Lord Jesus Christ; and soon, at His coming, we shall enter into the full blessedness of eternal life. (Paul normally views eternal life as future; it is the blessed hope of Titus 1:2; Titus 2:13; Titus 3:7).

Although born of Adam, the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is no longer viewed by God as being in Adam; we have been transferred from Adam to Christ. Because we are under Christ's headship, we are no longer under condemnation, even as it is recorded in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Head of Every Man.

Paul desired the Corinthian saints to "know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3). Adam was not only head over the lower creation, but in him, man was established by God as head of the woman. This divine relationship is not to be confused with that of Ephesians 5:23, where the husband is viewed by God as head of the wife. In every circle where men and women are found together, it is God's order for man to be the head. Christ having been established by God as head of every man, it is the bounden duty of every man to acknowledge Him in this place of authority, and God will hold him responsible if he refuses or neglects to do so. When Christ was raised from the dead, God made Him both Lord and Head. We know from Php 2:1-30 that every tongue shall yet confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Men are ignorant today, even in Christendom, of the great place that God has given to His Christ; they do not know that all things are in His hand, and that everything of which they partake to keep them in life in this world comes from Him who sits upon the throne of God. The Apostle Paul recognised that all came from God through Christ, saying to the saints at Philippi, "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Php 4:19). Because Christ is the head of every man, every man shall come forth from the grave in the power of Christ, even as we read in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22. In this passage we find God presented as Christ's head. Having become Man, Christ has forever taken the place of subjection to God (see 1 Corinthians 15:28), though ever having His own essential place in the Godhead. God's place as head in this Scripture is what David spoke of when he addressed Him as Head above all.

Head of the Body, the Church.

There are three mentions of Christ as Head of the body, and they all speak of His present relationship to the Church. Let us look at Colossians 1:1-29 to begin with, where the greatness of Christ, the head of the body, is portrayed by the Spirit of God. It may be well to remark that the Colossian saints were in danger of the subtle influences of philosophy, and the Apostle not only warns them, but shows them that in having such a glorious Head they needed nothing from the teachers of this world. How great is Jesus, the Son of the Father's love, in Whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. All the efficacy of the great work of redemption, accomplished on the cross, abides in Him in the Father's presence. He is the image of the invisible God; the One in Whom God, Who dwells in light unapproachable, is made known and represented before men. Coming into the creation He takes the place of Firstborn in relation to it, and this because He is the creator. (The position of firstborn relates to pre-eminence of place, not necessarily to birth, as we can see from both mentions in this passage of Scripture). All things created not only came from Him as their source, but He was the actual agent in creation, and the One for whose pleasure and glory they were brought into being. Eternal in His existence; supreme in His glory; He is before all; and the whole universe is held together through His wisdom, power and authority. Such is the Personal greatness of Him Who is the Head of the body. With such a Head, why should the saints of God, His members, seek for anything outside of Christ? Philosophy could never secure for men forgiveness of sins: this alone is to be found in Christ; why then should we look for anything from men when all of God is to be found in Him who is the image of the invisible God, and our Head, to Whom we are united? Moreover, He is the beginning of all that proceeds from God, whether in the old creation or the new creation; and coming out of death into the resurrection world, He takes the chief place — that which is rightly His — the place of Firstborn from the dead. When upon earth, all

the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Him, in view of reconciling all in the universe to the Godhead. How transcendently great is the Head of the body in His Personal excellency, and in every position He fills! A second mention of this subject in Colossians 2:19, brings out the sufficiency of the Head of the body. Colossians 2:16 indicates that the Colossian saints were in danger of being ensnared by the elements of Judaism, and the Apostle reminds them that the things of the law were but shadows of the substance now theirs in Christ. Why then should they follow after shadows when the substance, the body, of all that was spiritual belonged to them in their heavenly Head? There was another danger — the introduction of angels between the saints and God. They had no need of intermediaries, for God was immediately available to them in the Son of His love, His image, and their Head. There was nothing that saints of God could acquire either from Judaism or from angels; all for them dwelt richly in Christ, their living Head; and they were united to Christ and to each other as members of His body. What they needed was the increase of God, and this was only in Christ; and God had so formed the body in relation to the Head that through the joints and bands provided by Him there was the ministry of this divine increase. Joints and bands are not viewed as "gifts," but as functioning in the body to minister and unite together. They minister that which comes from the Head; binding together the saints through the heavenly grace of Christ. Alas! the professing church draws largely from the resources of this world; and its leaders are little concerned with the increase of God. Discourses on the things of this world, the display of human learning and natural wisdom; government by tradition and the principles of the world; and the evident neglect of the word of God, only too clearly manifest that the truth of "holding the Head" is virtually unknown. Christ as a living Person, who cares for His church, and who is indispensable to it, is little realised where His Name is professed. Do we realise that the body of Christ, the church of which we are members by His Spirit, is altogether dependent on the Head in heaven for the increase of God? Are we seeking the increase of God or for some other kind of increase from some other source? God would have us draw constantly upon His unfailing resources, which He has made available for us in our living Head above.

Christ as the Head of the body is also presented to us in Ephesians 4:1-32. In this Scripture He is seen as having ascended up on high, after having descended into the lower parts of the earth. Coming out of death, He led captivity captive; manifesting to the unseen, spiritual world the great triumph secured through His death and resurrection. Having plumbed the lowest depths, and having ascended up above all heavens, He will fill the whole universe with His fame and glory in the coming day. From the place of exaltation He now fills, He has given grace to all His saints, and has given gifts to men. These gifts are given for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, and they will be maintained until the church arrives at full maturity. God desires that we should grow through the truth ministered, so as not to remain immature Christians, and susceptible to all the varied influences of human teachings by which wicked men seduce unstable souls. We are to hold the truth in love, and through it grow up to Christ in all the beautiful features that are His. This brings us to the living union of the Head and the body of Christ. The whole body, which embraces every believer on earth indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is vitally united to Christ the Head, and is united together, the members being not only members of Christ, but members of each other. Joints of supply also connect the members together, and every part functioning, according to its measure, works for the body towards its self-edification in love. But all that supplies the body to procure its self-building comes from the Head to which the body is united. How dependent we are upon our heavenly Head! Whether we

consider the gift of grace given to each, the gifts given to men, or what comes to the body through the joints of supply; all comes from Christ on high, our exalted Head.

Whatever men may say, the church has no head but Christ. The Head of the body is in heaven, and there is no earthly head. Peter was the apostle of the circumcision, and Paul the apostle of the Gentiles; both had outstanding gifts from Christ and peculiar administrations, but neither claimed to be the church's earthly head, nor is it claimed for either in the Holy Scriptures. Direction for the church is vested only in the Head, and His mind for us is found in the Word, which suffices for our every need. To carry out the will of God, the divine resources of heavenly grace in the Head are available for us. Christ has been made everything to us and for us; the wisdom, authority and strength necessary to carry out anything in the assembly today resides in Him, and it is for us to draw upon Christ, and in this way prove how real His Headship to the church is.

Head of the Church.

Another aspect of Christ's Headship of the church is taught in Ephesians 5:1-33. The headship of the husband to the wife is compared in this Scripture to Christ's Headship of the church. We are taken back to the relationship established by God in the Garden of Eden between Adam and Eve: Eve was derived from Adam, then united to him, and placed under his headship in subjection. So it is with the church: derived from Christ, Who entered into the deep sleep of death that she might be His; in the will and counsel of God she is united to Him, and even now is brought into subjection to Him. We derive our all from Christ; life, resources, direction, nourishment and affection. No wife who is true to her husband would seek anything displeasing to him, or use the resources he has provided to gratify herself in things dishonouring to him. Christ's infinite resources are all available for us, so that we might carry out His will, and do what is for His pleasure. The church is left in the world to represent her absent lover, to manifest His features in testimony, to concern herself with His affairs, to be loyal to Him during the time of His absence from the world, and nothing but the supplies of grace that abide in Him can enable us to carry out His will. Christ has undertaken to nourish His church, and this makes her entirely independent of the world and its resources. But Christ also loves the church, and His love has been proved to the utmost in His death on the cross. That love will not be satisfied until Christ has the church with Himself, to present her to Himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Meanwhile He cares for the church, sanctifying and cleansing it with the washing of water by the word; this purifying ministry continuing throughout the church's earthly sojourn, until the heavenly Head has His bride all glorious before Him, holy and without blemish.

Head of Every Principality and Authority. This aspect of the Headship of Christ is found in Colossians 2:10, where we also learn of the dangers that beset the saints at Colosse. The Apostle had been speaking of the mystery of God, in which were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and this great mystery centred in Christ. Why then should saints of God turn to philosophy and Judaism; there were no treasures of wisdom and knowledge in them; all these wonderful treasures could only be known in communion with Christ, as occupied with Him. All the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Christ bodily, and they were filled full in Him according to this divine fulness. If they were filled full in Christ, they had everything in Him; without Him they had nothing. Their divine resources dwelt in Him Who was the Head of every principality and authority in the vast universe; such is the greatness of the place that Christ fills. He controls, directs and

supplies all the great spiritual beings that He created, and who carry out the behests of God in the wide realm of the creation. Is there not then sufficient in Christ for us to carry out God's will in the church? Do we need the help or advice of the world; do we require anything from human resources when we have such a Christ? Could the saints at Colosse receive anything from angels that was not already theirs in Him Who was the Head of all angelic beings? Indeed, they could receive nothing from angels or men for the accomplishing of the will of the Lord; all must come from Christ in heaven.

Head Over All Things to the Church.

Ephesians 1:1-23 unfolds the purpose of God, and according to this purpose God will gather the whole universe around Christ, the Man of His counsels, in the administration of the fulness of times. All the things in the heavens and on the earth are to be headed up in Christ, according to the mystery of God's will. This is a great secret into which God has brought His saints, and of which the great men of the world are completely ignorant. Statesmen and religious leaders alike are baffled with the conditions in the world, and they know not where all is leading; all their schemes and efforts to put the world right having proved fruitless. But God is not baffled: He has His Man at His right hand who will put everything right in this world; all the evil will be judged and suppressed, and all things brought under His Headship. Not only will everything on the earth be brought under Christ, but also the things in the heavens; every sphere of authority in the vast universe of God, and all the resources of the creation, will be at His disposal, and ordered according to His wisdom and will for the glory and pleasure of God. This is what God purposed to do before the world was made, and nothing can hinder its accomplishment; yea, all things of the present period of time are ordered in the government of God to subserve the counsel of His will.

None of the princes of this world knew anything of God's purpose in Christ, else they would not have crucified Him. Yet it is in death that the Man of God's purpose is found in this chapter; and God intervenes in a display of the exceeding greatness of His power, to give effect to what was in His purpose before the ages of time. Mighty power has been manifested in God's dealings with the old creation; the power that brought the earth from the chaos and darkness spoken of in the second verse of Genesis, and in ordering it for the habitation of man. The judgment of the old world; the overthrow of Pharaoh and his host; the destruction of the cities of the plain; the smiting of Sennacherib's army, and many other incidents of the Old Testament display God's power in relation to the old creation; but in the resurrection of Christ from the dead there was such a display of divine power as had never been seen before. The powers of darkness would fain have kept Christ in death, where the efforts of Satan, with men as the instruments, had brought Him, as allowed of God; but there was no power in the universe to withstand this mighty display of the exceeding greatness of God's power, which He wrought in Christ, in taking Him from the domain of death, and setting Him down at His own right hand in the heavenlies. In this place of exaltation, Christ is above every created intelligence in the universe, and His fame transcends that of every name of man or angel that has ever been known, or ever shall be known. According to God's thought, as pre-figured in Adam, and according to what had been before proclaimed in the eighth Psalm, all things are put under the feet of Christ, whose glory is above the heavens. Moreover, according to the purpose of God, unfolded in the earlier verses of this chapter, God has given Christ to be Head over all things. There is nothing in the whole creation that is not under Christ, and if this fulfils God's counsels regarding Man, it is also the suited answer to all that Christ

passed through on the cross to give effect to all that lay in God's will for the blessing of men.

Christ is indeed worthy of the supreme glory with which God has enshrined Him, where all the great beings of the universe are ranged under Him, and where every sphere of authority in the heavens and on the earth comes under His direction; but who could ever have conceived that He would have a companion to share this place of honour and glory? Yet so it is; and His companions are not the great beings that we have just mentioned, but those who once were sinners, far from God. The exceeding great power, manifested in the resurrection of Christ, is the power that brings Christ's companions from the place of sin and death into His own life, and into the heavenly places to be His companions. The church, for which Christ gave Himself in love, is His body and His bride, and she will for ever share His glory where He is Head over all to the church. It is not His Headship of the church that is taught here, but His Headship over all, with the church by His side. With such a glorious Head in heaven to maintain us constantly during our stay in this world, and Who will bring us shortly to Himself, to be with Him forever, should we not be living in the consciousness that we are here for Himself, to do His will, to give Him pleasure, to enjoy and respond to His love, and to manifest His features in testimony in the world out of which He was cast.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Mystery.

The Mystery.

(Notes of an address.)

Romans 16:25-27; 1 Corinthians 2:7-10; Ephesians 3:1-10; Ephesians 5:25-32; Ephesians 6:19-20; Colossians 1:24-28; Colossians 2:1-3.

Earlier, beloved brethren, we were occupied with the great truths mentioned in Romans 16:25. We looked first of all at PAUL'S GOSPEL, and saw how that God has come out in grace for the blessing of men, laying the basis in redemption in divine righteousness, so that He can justify the believer in Christ and set him before His face, where no charge of guilt can be brought against him. Among the special revelations given to Paul, we considered the truths unfolded in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58, "Behold I show you a mystery," and the rapture of the saints to heaven as communicated to the saints in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18, where Paul says, "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord." These precious truths, and many more, were ministered in the Gospel by the Apostle Paul, as Christ's chosen vessel, who was called to preach "The gospel of the glory of Christ."

Then we considered THE PREACHING OF JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY. We thought of the many ways in which Christ is brought before us in the Old and New Testaments; in the Psalms, by Isaiah and other prophets; by the four Evangelists and by the Apostle Peter. Then we contemplated the special way in which the Apostle Paul was privileged to see the Lord Jesus, and enabled to make Him known; a presentation of the Son of God that was peculiarly his own. In Ephesians 1:1-23 he presents Him in relation to the Mystery of God's will as the Man of God's counsels; in chapter 4 he shows the personal greatness of Christ, Who was powerful enough to enter into the stronghold of the enemy in the lower parts of the earth, then ascend far above all heavens that He might fill all things. From Colossians 1:1-29 we gathered something of the pre-eminence of the Son of the Father's love, Who is the Head of the body, the assembly; then saw Him in Colossians 2:1-23 as the Head of all principality and authority. In all these Scriptures, the Headship of Christ is seen: for it is as the Head that He is presented according to the revelation of the Mystery.

Let us now consider the great truth of THE MYSTERY. In Romans 16:1-27 we read that the Mystery was kept secret since the world began." It was a very great secret, which was neither revealed nor hidden in the Old Testament; it was not disclosed to Abraham, the friend of God; nor was it revealed to Moses, to whom God made known His ways; David did not know it, nor did Isaiah or any of the sages or prophets of ancient days. But "now" says the Apostle, it is "made manifest, and by prophetic Scriptures, according to commandment of the eternal God." The great secret of the ages has come to light, and is preserved for us in the writings of the New Testament, for these are the Scriptures alluded to here. God Himself has given the commandment, not only for the revelation of the mystery, but also for its maintenance in the inspired Word of God, so that it

might be handed down to us in all its purity. Much of the inspired word was communicated to Israel, but this precious truth is "made known for obedience of faith to all the nations." Only faith can lay hold of the truth, so that what has been revealed by God is still unknown to those who know not the heart of God. The word mystery is not used in Scripture in relation to what is mysterious, as men speak, but rather to present some distinctive truth that God has disclosed for our understanding. What is contained in the mysteries of the New Testament, and there are a number of them, is for the enlightenment of the saints, but only those with faith can profit by these divine unveilings; only the faithful are initiated into their truths; only those who have the Spirit of God have the capacity and the power to lay hold of the mind of God thus revealed. God desires to bring you and me into His secrets: do we desire to know them? In 2 Corinthians 2:1-17 the mystery is brought before us in a special way, "the wisdom of God in a mystery." The wisdom of God is hidden from the men of this world, and hidden in the very language that conveys it to the Christian. This hidden wisdom reveals to us the things that God had "predetermined before the ages for our glory." These wonderful things do not belong to earth or to time: they were in the mind and heart of God before the ages of time, and they were for the enrichment of those that the great men of this world think nothing of. It would not have been surprising if the Scripture had said these things in God's hidden wisdom were for His own glory, or for the glory of Christ; but how surpassing wonderful that He had plans to bring the weak things He had chosen, the ignoble and the despised of the world, into brightest glory with Christ His own beloved Son. But such is the wisdom of God! Our glory will not be found in this world: it will be with Christ in the ages yet to come. The things that God has given to us, that are so glorious, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have (they) entered into the heart of man." Our place down here, beloved friends, is in rejection, the outside place of shame: but "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him." This hidden wisdom lies entirely outside the natural vision of the man of this world: he had not the perception to discern it; its fame has never been heard by the learned or the noble: nor have the things it has prepared for the saints of God ever been conceived by the wisest or by the princes of this world. All has come to us through the Spirit of God, who searches into the depths of the divine treasures to reveal them before our wondering eyes. Moreover, we have received the Spirit which is of God that we might freely enter into these heavenly things that He has given us. Revealed by the Spirit, and communicating these spiritual things in a spiritual way, they are left for us in the divine record by inspiration of God, in words taught by the Spirit of God. The actual terms of the mystery are not brought out here, but there is sufficient to show its heavenly character and its eternal existence in the mind and heart of God. When the Lord disclosed the truth of the mystery, He chose a special vessel to whom to reveal it; this we learn from Ephesians 3:1-21 where Paul says "By revelation the mystery has been made known to me." On the way to Damascus, the Lord said to Saul "why persecutest thou me?" and this doubtless contains the essence of the truth of the mystery; the saints on earth are livingly united to Christ their Head in heaven; but the revelation of which the Apostle speaks here would be given later. It was a revelation peculiar to himself; it had not been given to the twelve by the Lord on earth, and even if Paul said "It has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets" he adds, "in (the power of the) Spirit." His revelation was directly from the ascended Head of the church, and this because of "the administration of the grace of God given" to him towards the Gentiles. He was the vessel specially chosen to preach among the Gentiles the Gospel of the unsearchable riches of the Christ, and to enlighten all with the things concerning the mystery. The administration of the grace of God of

which the Apostle speaks embraces his whole mission. Having spoken of the details of the mystery in Ephesians 3:7, he says, "Of which I am become minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me, according to the working of His power." Then he speaks of this same grace in relation to the Gospel in Ephesians 3:8, "To me, less than the least of all saints is this grace given . . ." His double ministry, of the Gospel and of the mystery, was in divine grace communicated according to the working of the power of God; it was thus wrought effectually in him for the accomplishment of the service given him to do. In Ephesians 3:6 we have the details of the mystery concerning the place that the believing Jews and Gentiles share jointly as heirs, in relation to the one body, and as regards the blessings of the Gospel. The mystery of God's will, in Ephesians 1:1-23 shows the place that Christ Himself has in the purpose of God; this chapter shows the place that Jew and Gentile occupy together; Ephesians 5:1-14 speaks of the "great mystery — concerning Christ and the church."

Here then are things "which in other generations" have "not been made known to the sons of men." Jewish and Gentile believers of this present dispensation share together, without distinction, without discrimination, in a wonderful inheritance. This does not refer to the inheritance to which Abraham was called, and of which Isaac, and Israel became the heirs; an earthly inheritance into which Israel entered, but from which they were cast out because of their sins. That earthly inheritance will yet be possessed and enjoyed by the nation, under the New Covenant. The inheritance of which the mystery speaks is a vast one, in which the saints have part with Christ. It is brought before us in Ephesians 1:11, "In whom we have also obtained an inheritance." "The Holy Spirit of promise — is the earnest of our inheritance," and God desires us to know even now, "The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:14; Ephesians 1:18). Earlier we saw that the Lord Jesus has been set down as Head over all things, and it is in this place the church shares all with Him as co-heirs. If we search the Old Testament through and through we shall not find the slightest hint that men would share such a wonderful inheritance with Christ in heaven: it was a deep secret, hidden in the heart of God.

Then there is the joint-body, formed of Jewish and Gentile believers of this dispensation. Neither in the Old Testament, nor in the Gospels, have we this precious truth hinted at; it was part of the mystery, hid in God, and given to the Apostle Paul to minister. It is not only that there is one body, but that it is jointly composed of Jew and Gentile. Over and over again in Paul's writings the truth of the body is brought before us: it is of immense value to the saints, and is the ground of our gathering at the present time, even as it was the ground of the saints' gathering at the beginning, that is, from the time that the truth of the assembly was ministered by Paul. Regarding this, we read in 1 Corinthians 10:17, "For we being many are one bread, one body: for we all partake of that one loaf;" then in Ephesians 4:4, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." This one body is Christ's body (Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 1:18); it is united to Him, the Head in heaven. What a wonderful privilege for the youngest believer in Christ to know: he is part of that one body of which Christ is the Head.

Another blessed part of the truth of the mystery is that Jew and Gentile are together joint-partakers of God's promise in Christ by the Gospel. We might well ask what this promise is. Is it the promise made by God when in Eden, He promised a deliverer, the seed of the woman? No, it was not that promise, though it is in the same Person the promise was made. Was it the promise given to Abraham in connection with his seed? No! but it is indeed in the true Seed that this promise is

fulfilled. The promise in Christ that has come to us in the Gospel is brought before us in 2 Timothy 1:1, "The promise of life which is in Christ Jesus," and also in Titus 1:2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." The Apostle John also refers to this promise saying, "And this is the promise that He hath promised us, life eternal" (1 John 2:25). The eternal life that was manifested in the Son of God on earth is now the portion of Jew and Gentile jointly, as having received the Gospel of God. Eternal life, as brought before us in the New Testament, is something entirely new so far as this world is concerned. It was with the Father in eternity, and was never seen on earth until it was manifested in the Son of God. The Old Testament saints had life from God, but it was of quite a different character. Life for Abraham was in relationship with God as Almighty; life for Moses and the saints of his day was in relationship with Jehovah; life for us is in relationship with the Father and the Son, even as we read, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom thou hast sent (John 17:3). J.N.D. said that charcoal and the diamond are the same chemically, but very different in form. So it is with life: all life is essentially the same, whether for Abraham, Moses or ourselves, but the knowledge of God made known in the Son is something very different from the knowledge of the Almighty or of Jehovah. Paul usually speaks of eternal life in connection with the coming day; it is as yet "The blessed hope," for it will be fully realised when, with our glorified bodies, we enter into the Father's house. In connection with the mystery, we learn in this chapter, Ephesians 3:1-21, God's present purpose in the creation. From other Scriptures we learn that God created the earth, and formed it, that it might be the platform on which to work out His counsels of grace. Something of this comes before us in Proverbs 8:1-36 where the Lord Jesus as Wisdom, the Man of God's counsels, looks forward to the time when he would become Man. He says, "Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him . . . rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth." Why did He rejoice in the habitable part of God's earth? Was it not because He would there tell out what lay in the heart of God, and lay in redemption the basis for the accomplishment of all His counsels? But here, the purpose of God in creating all things was to make known now to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places His manifold wisdom. What a wonderful secret is this that God has let us into! We are living in the very time when, in the church, in you and me, and all the saints of God of the present day, God is displaying before the great intelligences of heaven His wisdom in an entirely new way. Those great heavenly beings beheld God's workmanship in forming the earth, "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7); and there His wisdom was made known, even as we read, "Jehovah by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens" (Proverbs 3:19). Wisdom has also been seen in all God's ways with men from the beginning, whether in dealing with individuals or nations; but the wisdom that God now shows to the heavenly hosts surpasses all the wisdom He has even shown before. It is of an entirely different character; it is all-varied. What a wonderful vessel the church is! Formed in divine power and grace, of those who belonged to the old creation, but who are God's workmanship in new creation. What marvellous wisdom devised such a plan; and now the great intelligences of heaven are seeing it working out: they see what God is producing in you and me by His Spirit; they see God forming the vessel that shall soon display His glory before the whole universe. If the church is a lesson book for angels; the truth of the mystery is for the saints to learn and walk in the light of.

We have seen what the saints share together in Ephesians 3:1-21; in Ephesians 5:1-33 we learn of the relationship of the church to Christ. When God gave Adam a companion, suited to him, it

was not only man of the first order that was before His mind; Christ and the church was in His counsel before the world was made, and was in His thoughts when He took Eve from Adam's side and presented her to him. In Ephesians 1:1-23 and Ephesians 4:1-32 we find that the church is Christ's body, here we learn it is also His bride that He loves. He has manifested His love for the church, a love that passeth knowledge, by giving Himself for it. How dear is the church to God and to Christ! God purchased it with the blood of His own. Christ, like the man who found the treasure hid in the field, for the joy it gave him, sold all that he had. But Christ not only emptied Himself of the form of God, and relinquished the throne of Israel, but gave Himself.

Coming to Ephesians 6:1-24 we hear Paul asking for the prayers of the saints on behalf of his making known "The mystery of the Gospel." If the Apostle distinguishes between the Gospel and the Mystery, he will not have them separated, for the mystery is a truth that is deeply embedded in the heart of the Gospel. How many there are today who are content to know the aspect of the Gospel that brings relief to the conscience of the sinner; how few who truly value the wonderful mystery of the Gospel, which unfolds to the heart the deep things of God. Let us hold fast to the foundations of the Gospel, and also to the glorious superstructure that is brought to us in the mystery of the Gospel.

Passing over to Colossians we learn of the wonderful place the mystery has in the divine revelation. Paul says, "Now I rejoice in sufferings for you, and I fill up that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh, for His body, which is the assembly; of which I became minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given me towards you to complete the word of God, the mystery which (has been) hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been made manifest to His saints." Without the revelation of the mystery the word of God would not have been complete; it comes before us here as the keystone of the arch of divine revelation. If then this great truth has such a remarkable place in Scripture, why are the saints not going in for it? Is it because it will separate them from much they want to go in for down here? With the knowledge of this precious truth in the soul, we look at the things of this world in an entirely new way. Look at the tender and touching way in which the Spirit of God brings this truth before us; "To whom God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery." God seems to say, "Shall I hide from the saints the deep secret that has been in my heart from eternity? No, I will bring them near to me, and tell them this wonderful secret." We tell our secrets to those who are nearest and dearest to us. This is what God has done. And what is the secret? "Christ in you, the hope of glory." In the coming day, in fulfilment of the prophecies of old, Christ will yet be found on earth among His earthly people; but today, Christ's place is in or among His saints; He dwells in them as their life; He is among them, their Head, to direct them in all His affairs. His glory is not here at present; but we have the blessed prospect of seeing Him in His glory, and sharing it with Him. In our final Scripture we read of the Apostle's conflict. What conflict was his to bring to the saints the truth confided to him. We too shall have conflict if we value the truth of God. But, if we are to enter into the truth of the mystery our hearts must be comforted and knit together in love; these are the conditions in which we can unitedly enjoy what God has so blessedly unveiled before us. What riches of understanding God has provided for us here; He has hidden for our exploration in the Mystery of God, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Men are searching for wisdom and knowledge in the philosophy of this world, and sad it is that some Christians are numbered among them; they know not that every treasure of wisdom and knowledge is hidden in this great mystery,

and therefore cannot be acquired anywhere else. Observe that it is the mystery of God; it belongs to Him; it contains the treasures that are of infinite value; all the deep secrets of His heart and mind are in it. Are we going in for these wonderful things then? There they are waiting for us to acquire. If we go in for them, we shall get them a little at a time, and we shall be enriched with the great things that belong to God.

Wm. C. Reid. And He that, on His way to save, Alone to darkest Calvary went, And there Himself so freely gave, Shall to Himself the Bride present.

S. The Path of Obedience.

The Path of Obedience. As a creature man has been brought by God into the place of obedience, and the present condition of men as alienated from God springs from the disobedience of the first man. In lowly grace the Lord Jesus, the Second Man, the Man out of heaven, came into the place of obedience. Ever commanding in His rights as God, in stooping to Manhood He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. His was a path of perfect obedience; "Becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross." The first man became disobedient unto death; the Second Man became obedient even unto death.

Nothing less than the obedience manifested in Jesus is that to which God has called His people; we are sanctified by the Spirit unto the obedience . . . of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:2). The Lord Jesus views our obedience as proof of our love to Him, even as He said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Again in John 14:21 He says, "He that hath my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me; but he that lves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him."

First of all we have to challenge our hearts as to whether we are really acquainted with the commandments of the Lord; for how can we keep them without really knowing them? His commandments must be learned, and how else can we learn them but by becoming acquainted with the Scriptures. There are the individual commandments given in the Gospels and Epistles telling us what the Lord desires us to do. He instructs us in this Gospel to wash one another's feet (John 13:1-38), to love one another as He has loved us (John 13:34); to abide in Him (John 15:4). In Matthew 5:1-48 He tells us to let our light shine before men, not to resist evil, to love our enemies and to be perfect as our heavenly Father (Matthew 5:16, Matthew 5:39, Matthew 5:44, Matthew 5:48); and many such commandments are given for our obedience. After writing many commandments in the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians the apostle says, "If any one thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him recognise the things that I write to you, that it is the Lord's commandment (1 Corinthians 14:37). So that it is not enough to regulate our conduct in individual life by the Lord's commandments, we must learn so that we may keep His commandments in relation to His will in the assembly.

Having learned the commandments of the Lord we are to obey Him in keeping them, for obedience is the proof of love. Some would plead their love to the children of God as an excuse for walking in a wrong path, but this will never do; "Hereby know we that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments" (1 John 5:2). Simple obedience to what God has commanded is the proof that we love God and also His children. Is it love to the children of God either to lead them or to follow them in a way that is contrary to the expressed commandment of the Lord? His commandments are not grievous (1 John 5:3), but they rather manifest the way for the divine nature to express itself in righteousness, holiness and love.

Obedience to the Lord's commandments calls forth the expression of the Father's love. Every member of the divine family is loved by the Father, but special circumstances and occasions

enable the obedient child to learn and taste in a fresh way that precious, wonderful love. Even in human families a father's love is drawn out to the obedient child, while acts of disobedience not only hinder the expression of the love in a way in which the child can find pleasure, but rather compel the righteous father to chastise the child for its good. The expression of our love to the Lord Jesus gives us the realisation of the Father's love, even as the Lord said to the disciples, "The Father Himself loveth you because ye have loved me" (John 16:27). No doubt the disciples could not then appreciate the full blessedness of the Lord's words, not having the Spirit; but now, by the indwelling Spirit, how sweet and precious is the thought that we are the loved objects of the Father, and that His love is practically realised as we walk in the path of obedience. With obedience there is also the realisation of the love of the Lord Jesus in its special expression towards us. There can be no doubting the love of the Lord Jesus to all His own, but we must understand that apart from the wonderful expression of His love in His death upon the cross, which nothing should be allowed to dim in our souls, there is the expression of love in relation to our being in the world for Him. Look at the difference between John 13:1-38, where the Lord washes the disciples' feet, and Revelation 1:13, where He is girt about the breasts with a golden girdle. In the former He is expressing His love towards His own, the love that could not be affected by all that was immediately before Him, for "He loved them to the end." In the latter His love is restrained because of the state of the assemblies. Sometimes the Lord has to restrain the expression of His love towards us because of unjudged sin: it is His advocacy we then need; but again, when we are obeying His commandments His love can flow out unhinderedly.

Wm.C. Reid.

S. The Preaching of Jesus Christ According to the Revelation.of the Mystery.

The Preaching of Jesus Christ According to the Revelation.of the Mystery.

(Notes of an address.) Ephesians 1:9-11; Ephesians 1:19-23; Ephesians 4:7-16; Colossians 1:13-18; Colossians 2:8-10.

While considering Paul's Gospel, we read from the 16th of Romans about the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery. The preaching of Jesus Christ is a big subject. We might consider it according to the Old Testament Scriptures, and meditate on the Lord Jesus as Son of God, King of Israel, as presented in the second Psalm; or view Him as Son of Man in relation to His glory indicated in Psalms 8:1-9; or trace in Isaiah the greatness and sufferings of Him Who is called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Then we might consider the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the way He is brought before us in the four Gospels, as The King in Matthew, The Servant of God in Mark, The Son of Man in Luke and The Son of God in John. But tonight I desire to speak of the Lord Jesus as the Apostle Paul speaks of Him in the Scriptures we have read, according to the deep secret that was hidden in the heart of God from eternity until the Lord Jesus was glorified in heaven, after having glorified the Father in His life on earth and in His death upon the cross. The great mystery of which the Apostle speaks was neither disclosed nor hidden in the Old Testament; it was hid in God, and was not unveiled until the Holy Spirit came; yea, until the glorified Christ made it known in a special revelation to Paul. To see the Lord Jesus according to the revelation of this wonderful divine secret I have read these passages of Scripture from the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians.

Ephesians 1:1-23 shows the Lord Jesus to us as the Man of God's counsels; the fourth chapter views Him as going down into the dark domain of death, then ascending in His own might and triumph far above all heavens that He might fill all things. Colossians 1:1-29 presents the Son of the Father's love in a rich galaxy of glories, pre-eminent in all things; while Ephesians 2:1-22 tells us that "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." In these Scriptures, the Lord Jesus is brought before us in an entirely new way, not as in the Old Testament, not as in the four Gospels, not as preached by the twelve apostles, but according to the glorious mystery, the ministry of which was committed to the Apostle Paul. From the first verse read we see that God has made known unto us the "Mystery of His will." Is it not wonderful to think that God has taken men into the great secrets of His heart; that He has told us what He is going to do? Men have for long been looking for a man who could manage their affairs for them; one who would be able to subdue all the evil that is constantly manifesting itself in the world; one who could dispense the provision of earth equitably among the nations, and put an end to unrest and strife. When the head of the revived Roman empire comes, men will probably think that they have at last found the man for whom they have so long looked, only to find that he will involve them in the most devastating judgments this world has ever known. But God has His Man in reserve, the Lord Jesus Christ, the

Man of His counsels, who will not only head up all things on earth, but also all things in heaven. Many things lie in the will of God; there is the will of God connected with His Son while on earth; there is the will of God in relation to each one of us individually, in relation to His church, and in relation to many other things; but here is God's great secret regarding His will for the whole universe — what He has purposed and determined — to gather together the whole universe under the Headship of Christ, so that He might be supreme, and hold all things together for the glory and the pleasure of God. Nothing can fail of all that God has purposed; to accomplish the mystery of His will God has His plans in the "counsel of His own will," and He is working all things according to this counsel. In Ephesians 1:20 the Man of God's counsels is found in death. Why is He found lying in death? It was necessary for Him to die, for only through His death could the will of God be brought to fruition. But from the time of Christ's death God begins to work in view of securing all that lay in His will; and He commences with a display of the exceeding greatness of His power. He manifests the kind of power that will bring everything to pass that He has purposed; it is a power the like of which had never been seen before; it is irresistible, so that nothing in the wide universe will be able to hinder Him establishing Christ as the Head of the whole scene in the coming day. It is Christ whom God has chosen as the Man of His pleasure, and it is in Christ that God has displayed the greatness of His mighty power. God allowed the devil and men to slay His Christ; it was then He intervened, and showed that His power infinitely transcended that of men and Satan. They could not hinder God raising Christ from the dead. Pilate could seal the tomb, and the powers of darkness marshal all their forces, but nothing in all the armouries of earth or hell could stand against the mighty power of God. Throughout the history of man on earth, and doubtless before men inhabited the earth, there have been displays of divine power in the creation; but there never had been such a display as this before. It was not only that God took Christ out of death, but He set Him down at His own right hand in the heavenly places: He took Him from the very bottom and put Him on the very pinnacle of the universe. In that place He is above, yea, far above every position of greatness known in earth and heaven; and His Name transcends in fame the names of all the great ever known or that ever shall be known. But notice particularly how the presentation of Jesus Christ in this passage is connected with the truth of the mystery. In this place of glory Christ is not alone. His place at God's right hand is His alone; but in the day when He will be Head over all things, the church will be with Him to share His glory. When Adam was set up in Eden by God as head over the lower creation, Eve was taken from his side, not to be put under his feet, but to be at his side to share his glory. So the church has been derived from Christ, and united to Him, to share His glory in the day of its display before heaven and earth. But the church is not only Christ's bride; it is His body; and through the members of His body Christ will express His thoughts and carry out God's will in the wide creation. When we see Christ in Ephesians 4:1-32, He is the Giver of grace to His own from the place of exaltation into which He has gone. His place in death and His resurrection are viewed quite differently from what we have considered in Ephesians 1:1-23. There He was lying in all the weakness of death; here, He steps in His own intrinsic power into death's dark domain, into the stronghold of the enemy; and in mighty triumph leads captive the forces of darkness, ascending in His own rights far above all heavens to fill all things. In chapter 1 God raised Him from the dead, but here we have a Man Who is great enough, and powerful enough, to meet the foe and to overcome him, and to fill the whole universe with His fame and glory. From His place of exaltation, Christ not only gives grace to each one of us, but gives gifts unto men. This is one of the special features of the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the

mystery. While on earth He sent out the twelve apostles with a special mission in relation to the kingdom; from the glory the Lord Jesus gives the gifts, specified in Ephesians 4:11, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. The apostles and prophets have done their work (see Ephesians 2:20) and they abide with us in the writings of the New Testament; but we still have the other gifts, and shall have them until "we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Depend upon it, the church will yet come to what it is in the counsels of God, "The fulness of Him that fills all in all;" not all the power of Satan and hell can prevent it. All around us we have the witness to the church's failure and ruin, but in spite of it all, the church will be brought to the stature of the fulness of Christ, and this because Christ has triumphed over all the power of the enemy. In His place of triumph the church is associated with Christ as His body, and from the heavenly Head the body receives the direction and nourishment which works for the body its self-edifying in love. There are therefore three things that come from Christ to His own; first, grace to each individual, that which is peculiarly Christ's gift to you and me; secondly, the gifts to men for the help of the saints and the edification of the body; thirdly, the resources from the Head of the body, through the supply of the joints and the effectual working of every part, for the building up of the body of Christ.

Passing to Colossians 1:1-29 we have the Lord Jesus Christ brought before us in yet another way, but still according to the revelation of the mystery. In Ephesians 1:1-23 we saw Him as the Man of God's counsels; then in Ephesians 3:1-21 as the Man of power; here He is the Son of the Father's love. John's Gospel also speaks of the Lord Jesus as Son, loved by the Father, but there it is the Son of God in Manhood on earth; here it is the Son in His present glory in heaven. Moreover in John's Gospel, although the Lord Jesus in resurrection makes known the Father's Name, and shows the new relationship into which the disciples are brought as His brethren, we do not find the Lord Jesus in relationship with the church as such. Here, the Apostle by the Spirit is bringing out the Personal greatness of the Head of the body, the church. Still, there is a very marked resemblance to Colossians and John; both speak of Christ as our life, both bring out the glory of His Sonship eternally, and both speak of Him as creator.

First of all then we contemplate the glory of Christ's Sonship, the glory of the relationship in which He now is, and ever was, with the Father. Then we see in Him the glory of redemption, and it is because we have redemption in the Son that we are able to behold the glories that follow. The best authorities omit the words "through His blood," which are rightly found in Ephesians 1:1-23 : it is not exactly how the redemption was secured that is before the Spirit of God here, but rather the greatness of the Person in whom all the efficacy and the glory of that great work abide. Because of the abiding virtue of the work of redemption in Christ, we have the forgiveness of sins.

While upon earth, the Lord Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" He was the perfect and full revelation of the Father. Where the Son now is, in the presence of God, He is the image of the Invisible God. It is not exactly what He was, but what He is that is emphasised. God still dwells in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen, nor can see; but that invisible God is seen in One who perfectly represents Him. Man was made in the image of God; but only the Son could be the image of the invisible God. Adam represented God in the lower creation, but the Son fully sets forth His thoughts, desires, counsels and activities. All that can be known of God is to be found in the Son as the image of the invisible God; and it is as occupied with the Son in the glory

that belongs to Him — as our minds are set on the things above where Christ sits at God's right hand — that we learn of God and find joy in Himself and His things. I do not think that we shall ever learn, not even in heaven, anything of God except in the Son.

Having become Man, having stepped into the creation, the One who brought it into being must take the first place in it; therefore is He the "Firstborn of all creation." (Firstborn has to do with precedence. Normally this belonged to the son who was born first, but the birthright could be lost. Esau sold his birthright to Jacob, and Reuben lost his birthright to Joseph — 1 Chronicles 5:1-2; Hebrews 12:16). What other place could the Son, the Creator, have but the first place when coming into His creation? First, He is brought before us as the source of all, "Because by Him were created all things." The word translated by is sometimes translated in, and here draws our attention to the great truth that creation proceeds from Him. Secondly, "All things have been created by Him." Now He is viewed as the active agent in creation. Thirdly, all things have been created "For Him." All things have been brought into existence to serve His will and pleasure. There are three outstanding presentations of the creation where the Son is viewed as creator: in John 1:1-51, where The Word makes all, "Without Him was not anything made that was made;" In Hebrews 1:1-14, where, by the Son, God makes the worlds, the physical universe; here, all comes from the Son, "For by Him were all things created, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth." All the great spheres of government and dominion, both heavenly and earthly, are specially in view in this Scripture. The reason is evident later in the chapter; what he creates He reconciles; that is where there is need for reconciliation, on the ground of redemption. There is coming a time when the whole universe shall be for God's pleasure; what was lost through sin will be brought back by the Son. Not a single seat of authority in the wide universe will be in alien hands; all will be in the hands of Christ.

"He is before all" in point of time, and also in point of Personal greatness; before all the creation that came from His hand; before every creature, no matter into what station the Lord has brought him or allowed him to take. Think of all the great men the earth has known, whether in Scriptural or profane history; the Son is before them all. Think of the great angelic beings that the Colossian saints were being tempted to worship; the Son created them, and He must have precedence of them.

"All things subsist together by Him." We can thank God for the outstanding men of our generation, who have been the instruments used to check the forces of evil in this world; but we must look behind all such men to see the One Who holds back the evil powers of the universe. All around us things appear to be out of hand and going to pieces: why have they held together? Christ holds all things together. Of old He said to the raging floods, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed;" He says this now to the powers of darkness that would fain overwhelm all ordered government in this world. We have but a feeble idea of the great forces, spiritual forces, that are active in the affairs of men at the present time; the "principalities, authorities, the universal lords of darkness; the spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies." Although the seat of their evil power is not in this world, yet their diabolical influence is exercised over the minds and spirits of men, and only the power of the Son of God holds them in check. Knowing that all is held together by Christ; knowing that His power is greater than all the forces of evil, why should there ever be a tremor in the hearts of His own? While sad when we think of all that is transpiring in the world, our hearts should be peaceful and calm in the knowledge of Christ's

supremacy. But the preaching of Jesus Christ involves the whole truth of the Headship of Christ, and this preaching according to the revelation of the mystery is specially connected with Christ as the Head of the body, the church. Each of the passages of Scripture from which we have read speaks in one way or other of the Headship of Christ in relation to the church, and here, it would seem that the Spirit of God is particularly bringing before the Colossian saints the greatness of their Head, so that they might not be drawn away to the barrenness of Judaism and philosophy, but seek their true spiritual substance in Christ, the Head of the body.

All things proceed from the Son, for he is the "Beginning." We have seen Him as the starting point of the creation that will soon be reconciled to the fulness of the Godhead; but He is the starting point of all in the new creation. If then all begins with Christ; if all our blessing begins with Christ; if the life that God has given us comes from Him; why should the Christian imagine that he can continue without Christ? and this is the meaning of seeking the things of this world, whether religious or otherwise. As "Firstborn from among the dead," Christ takes the first place in the resurrection world. He was not exactly the first out of the realm of death, for both Elijah and Elisha brought dead to life, and the Lord while upon earth raised others. But I should judge that all returned to death again. Whether or not, in the world of resurrection, the Lord Jesus takes precedence over all others. "In all things He must have the pre-eminence." Wherever we see the Lord Jesus; into whatever circle He enters in grace or in power, He must have the first place. Our passage in Colossians 2:1-23 shows the dangers that beset the saints at Colosse, and also the divine presentation of the truth regarding Christ which, if received, would rescue them from their dangers. Well does the Apostle say, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit," for these things have ruined the testimony of many dear saints of God, and led astray many who have been brought up among the saints of God. There is no room for human thoughts in the things of God; the assembly has no need for the help of the great thinkers of this world; indeed, they do grave harm to all who imbibe their opinions, for all human thoughts, all that springs from the mind of man away from God, leads to infidelity. Philosophy makes much of man, and those who absorb it usually think very highly of themselves and of their intellectual powers, but it is empty; there is nothing substantial in it for the soul or mind of man, nothing that can bring peace to the conscience or joy to the heart. It allures with great promises, but is actually empty and deceitful.

Human teachings and worldly principles have invaded the professing church, and have put Christ outside. The men of this world can understand the things of the world and are controlled by the principles of the world, but they have no desire for the things of Christ; nor can they understand them. But Christ is enough for the Christian, and only Christ and His will should be allowed in the Christian circle. In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," where He now sits in the presence of God, and the Christian is complete in Him. If then we are complete in Christ, why should we seek for anything outside of Christ? In Christ we have everything; without Christ we have nothing. What is there outside of the fulness of the Godhead? When Christ was upon earth, all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Him (Colossians 1:19); The Father was present in Him in testimony, the Spirit indwelt Him in power, and the Son was present in Person. Where Christ is now, in heaven, there is nothing outside of Him. And how wonderful to think that we have been brought into association with such an One! What infinite resources of wisdom and grace are available for us in Christ, so that no matter how great our difficulties are, no matter how

great the weakness and confusion of the last days, no circumstance or combination of circumstances need find us without the help of Him Who can resolve every difficulty for us.

Christ is not only the Head of the body, but also the Head of every principality and authority in the universe. Do angels rely on their own wisdom, or draw upon their own resources? No! they are subject to Christ and entirely dependent upon Him. They carry out His will, under His direction. How solemn then the state of those who would go to angels instead of Christ; and how sad to think that saints of God, who form part of the body of Christ, being thus united to Him so as to draw from Him the nourishment, wisdom and resources that abide in Him, should seek the advice and help of the men of this world for the assembly of God! This then, beloved brethren, presents something of the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery; the Scriptures present it perfectly; it is but feebly and partially that we enter into it. How wonderful is the presentation of the Son of God in the Scriptures; wonderful wherever we read of Him, whether viewed in the Old Testament or in the Gospels; whether presented by the Apostle Peter or the Apostle John; whether seen as in Paul's Gospel, or according to the great secret of the ages, now disclosed in connection with His place as Head of the body, the church.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Present Ministry of Christ

The Present Ministry of Christ His Priesthood. The priestly ministry of Christ is summed up for us in the words of Holy Scripture, "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: we have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:1-2). It is clear from this and other passages in the same epistle that the priesthood of Aaron in relation to the tabernacle which Moses pitched is a type of Christ's priesthood in connection with a divine order of service and worship which is spoken of here as "The true tabernacle." What was foreshadowed in the material building with its worldly sanctuary is now fulfilled in a spiritual system of worship connected with heaven.

Although there were foreshadowings in the old system of the spiritual realities in Christianity, it is necessary to observe the marked contrasts between what was earthly and what is heavenly. Christ's priesthood is not of the Aaronic order, but "After the order of Melchisedec"; "The law made nothing perfect," but "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." In Christianity we have "A more excellent ministry . . . a better covenant . . . better promises"; "a better hope"; better sacrifices"; "A greater and more perfect tabernacle"; "An unchangeable priesthood." with "eternal redemption," "eternal salvation," and "eternal inheritance."

Christ's priesthood belongs to heaven, but it is founded on His great sacrificial work on the cross, and is consequent to His having become Man. These things are spoken of in Hebrews 2:1-18, where it is written, "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people; for in that He himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17-18). The sacrifices of the law, and especially those of the great day of atonement, are spoken of in this epistle in connection with the Aaronic priesthood, and they typified the one great sacrifice of Christ through which He made "propitiation for the sins of the people." There could not have been for us a great high priest had not Christ, by the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. To be a merciful and faithful high priest, Christ must needs become Man, perfect Man, and enter practically into all the details of human life in this world, learning "obedience by the things which He suffered." As God He had ever commanded; as Man He learns what obedience is. He knew human suffering as no other ever did or could, because of His intrinsic holiness and perfect obedience to the will of God. He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, bearing in his own spirit the sufferings that His power removed from men. Hunger, thirst and weariness were His, with no place for His head in this world: He wept over Jerusalem, and with the sorrowing sisters of Bethany. and groaned near the tomb of Lazarus as He felt the awful ravages of sin. Disowned, rejected and despised by Israel, and receiving hatred for His love, and only evil for the grace and goodness constantly manifested, the Son of God passed through this world as Man, perfect in all His feelings, entering into all the sorrows and sufferings that belonged to men, but with a character and intensity of feeling peculiar to Himself.

Having passed through this world a perfect Man, and having entered perfectly into all the conditions of life that were proper to men, the Son of God accomplished redemption, and now "We have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." The glory of Christ's Person shines out from the place of His exaltation, and we can say with the writer to the Hebrews, "We see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour." His place at God's right hand has not only been given to Jesus; it is His by right, therefore in Hebrews 1:1-14 we read, "When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." In Hebrews 10:12 we see Jesus sitting down in the greatness of accomplished redemption, and in Hebrews 8:1 He sits down in the greatness of His priesthood. As a merciful and faithful high priest Jesus is able to succour His saints in their trials, and how real to His own is the help of Christ amidst the testings of the present life. Having been through all the way before us, the Son of God has a heart that is touched with the feeling of our weaknesses, and the sense of this in the soul brings immense comfort in sorrow. Of old, the high priest bore the names of the children of Israel on his shoulders, and on his breastplate; Christ sustains His saints with a divine strength, and comforts them with a love beyond all telling. Our great high priest is on the throne of grace, and thither we can repair to "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." The throne of grace is for us as needy saints passing through the wilderness. We come there with boldness, knowing that every question regarding our sins has already been met in the death of Christ. We do not come to the throne of grace when we have failed: that has to do with Christ's advocacy, not with His priesthood. God would have us to realise that we are altogether dependent on Christ, and independent of the world. Whether in sorrow or trial we can go boldly to Christ; His ministry is available to us at all times, a ministry of mercy and grace that will sustain, no matter how great the need may be. Therefore it is written. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). Priesthood supplies the mercy and grace that prevent failure, that save us from falling.

What has engaged us thus far has been the aspect of Christ's priestly ministry from the throne of grace to meet the needs of His own in their pathway through the world. At the beginning of Hebrews 8:1-13 another feature of Christ's service is indicated where He is spoken of as "Minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle." In the tabernacle of old, Aaron's service included the arranging of the lamps on the candlestick, the supplying of the table with the showbread, and the burning of incense morning and evening on the golden altar when he attended the lamps. These things have their answer in the true tabernacle, in which the Son of God serves as Minister of the sanctuary. From Leviticus 24:1-23 we learn that Aaron was to arrange the lamps before Jehovah continually, upon the pure candlestick. The light was to shine within the holy place, where it would show up the beautiful features of the candlestick, and also the workmanship and materials of the altar and the table, not to speak of the colours of the curtains and the veils. This shining has not to do with the testimony of God to the world, but speaks to us of how Christ serves in heaven to bring out in the lives of His saints His own beautiful features for the eye and pleasure of God.

Aaron had to dress the lamp from evening to morning, and had also "to arrange the lamps before Jehovah." The dressing of the lamps would involve the work of the snuffers, the removal of that which would hinder the shining of the light. Does not this speak of the care of Christ for His own? Sometimes His ways with us give pain, but every action is directed with perfect wisdom, and in infinite love, to remove from us things which hinder the expression of His own heavenly graces.

Our circumstances and conditions of life are also watched over by the Minister of the true tabernacle, and often His arrangement of our place for shining does not suit us, but how blessed when we are content with His ordering, knowing that He knows best where to set us for the Father's glory. It is a great privilege to represent Christ before the world, but how blessed too the thought that the light was to shine "before Jehovah." What joy it must give to the Father to see the features of His own Son coming out in His saints, and to know that this is because of the present ministry of Christ. Does not the dressing of the lamps "from evening to morning" tell of the constant and unwearied service of Christ in the presence of God during the night of His absence from this world? Men speak of "the dark ages," when there was little in the way of public testimony for God that men could take account of, but there was that which God could take notice of. Saints of God may fail, but there is no failure with the Minister of the sanctuary. Continually, during the long night, He has been serving God and working with the saints of God, so as to bring out the buds, the flowers and the fruit that were on the candlestick. Although the church failed in its collective witness, there have always been, through the care and watchfulness of Christ, individuals among the saints of God who have manifested divine life in its incipient features, as also its fragrance and mature fruits. It may be that the individual lamps can be applied to local assemblies, but where there was little knowledge of the truth of the assembly, and a very imperfect expression of what it is in God's mind, there have been isolated saints, and doubtless, too, small companies of saints, in whom the light shone for the glory of God.

It appears from Leviticus 24:1-23 that initially the loaves were set "upon the pure table before the Lord" by Moses, but afterwards the service belonged to the high priest, even as it is recorded, "Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually." The twelve loaves surely represent the twelve tribes of Israel, and the fact that they were placed upon the table each sabbath would confirm that God will never forget His ancient people Israel. In His public dealings with Israel

God has called them Lo-ammi," that is "Not my people," but they are "before the Lord continually" as seen in the twelve loaves. Paul's faith beheld the twelve loaves on the pure table before Jehovah when he spoke to king Agrippa of "Our whole twelve tribes serving incessantly day and night." Our great high priest will assuredly appear "To raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel," and until that day He serves in the holy place with the twelve loaves upon the pure table. When He comes forth. Israel will indeed be blessed through Him who gave Himself for them, on the ground of the new covenant in His blood.

Intimately connected with the dressing and the lighting of the lamps was the burning of the sweet incense upon the golden altar morning and evening: it was to be "a perpetual incense before Jehovah throughout your generations" (Exodus 30:7-8). God will not only have the features of Christ shining before Him in His own, but will have Christ presented to Him in worship. These two things though distinct cannot be separated. for God's pleasure is not only found in our lives, but in our approach to Him in worship, and the present service of Christ has both in view. The Scripture that says "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," is very closely connected with, "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Ephesians 2:10; Ephesians 2:18). Our place now, through grace, is in the holiest of all. where we have boldness to enter by the blood of Jesus. When Aaron entered the holiest, once a year, on the day of atonement, he was commanded to

take the golden censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small. This he was to bring "Within the veil; and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not" (Leviticus 16:12-13). Man could not be in the presence of God apart from the fragrance of the Person of God's dear Son. It is because Christ is in the presence of God, and because His precious blood has met all the claims of God's throne, that we have boldness to enter the holiest. We are accepted in the Beloved, and we have a "Great Priest over the house of God," so that we can draw near to God.

Israel never had access into the holiest. This place of nearness we owe to the sovereign grace of God, and to the work of Christ. In Hebrews 9:4 there is no mention of the golden altar, but the golden censer is found there along with the ark. The reason for this is that Christ, our great high priest, has entered into the holiest and abides there. Now the function of the altar is for us connected with the golden censer, for our worship is in the holiest. Coming into the immediate presence of God we are engaged with all that speaks of Christ there, and as thus occupied with Him we are enabled to worship, presenting Christ in the perfections that are depicted in the beating of the incense small. As we consider the precious details of all that has come out in Christ, how it bows the heart in worship before God. This then is something of Christ's present priestly ministry: that which helps us in the day by day exercises and trials of our desert journey, as we pass through the world as pilgrims and strangers. Then there is the service of Christ in relation to all the circumstances and conditions of life, in which He orders all in view of our being like Himself, so as to bring out the beautiful traits that marked Him when He was here, and this for the pleasure of God the Father. Nor is Israel forgotten in His present ministry: for He maintains their place before God in view of the coming day. The worship of God is His concern too; not only does He lead the praises to the Father in the midst of the assembly, but He is the Great Priest through whom we have boldness to enter the holiest. His Advocacy. When the Lord Jesus was upon the earth He cared for, and ministered to, His disciples, knowing that they had been given to Him by the Father. In every possible way He had looked after them, for He loved them dearly, and just before leaving the world He handed them over to the tender care of the Father, saying, "Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given me . . . While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy Name" (John 17:11-12). The Lord had also spoken to His own of the coming of the Holy Spirit, who would be to them "Another Comforter," dwelling with them and in them, teaching them and bringing to their remembrance what He had spoken to them, leading them into all the truth, and bringing before their hearts His glory in the Father's presence, and the coming glory in which He would be displayed before the world. Although so richly provided for in the care of the Father and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Lord's care and ministry would not cease towards His own. The first half of John 13:1-38 brings before us something of the present ministry of Christ for His saints. What was indicated in the feast of the Passover must first be fulfilled before Christ could enter upon His present ministry; "Christ our passover" must be "sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). The washing of the disciples' feet was in view of the new place into which the Son of God would bring them in association with Himself and in relationship with the Father. This is indicated in the words, "Jesus knew that His hour was come, that He should depart out of this world unto the Father." In passing through this world, the Son had glorified the Father in every step of His wonderful path of subjection and obedience, accomplishing His will and giving Him constant pleasure. He had spoken to His own the things of heaven, and

had bound their thoughts and affections around Himself. In leaving this world, His own would be left behind to represent Him here, but in going into the Father's presence, He would carry their affections with Him, and He would have their thoughts engaged with the Father and with Himself whither He went.

What love to His disciples the Lord had shown; it was a love that nothing could impair, and a love that would carry Him onwards to the cross, through death. so that His loved ones might be associated with Him on the other side of death. This same love was about to be expressed in the washing of the disciples' feet; not only in the act itself, but in what it spoke of — their having part with Him before the Father in the enjoyment of His love. With such love as the background to what follows, how awful is the enmity of Satan and the treachery of Judas! Jesus was thinking only of His Father's glory and the blessing of His own; Satan was using the avarice of the human heart to encompass the death of God's Son in his malicious attempt to defeat the counsels of God. How debased is man's nature that plots to betray One that was the perfection of goodness and love, and who manifested divine grace and kindness to men. In the consciousness of all with which He was surrounded, and of all that lay before Him, the Son of God acts in the knowledge of the greatness of the trust that the Father committed to Him. Such was the Father's love for and confidence in His Son that He put every-thing into His hands. Jesus would not allow anything to turn Him from the accomplishment of all that the Father had entrusted to Him; every detail would be carried out, no matter what the cost to Himself. No human heart can tell how the blessed Lord felt at this moment the opposition of Satan and the treachery of Judas, but He was sustained and made superior to all by the thought of the Father's confidence in Him, and by His great love for His own. He had come from God to make Him known, and he would return to God with all His work gloriously completed. This holy confidence engaged His thoughts as He sat with His own at the Paschal supper, and as He rose and laid aside His garments. His actions are not hurried, His every movement is marked with dignity and grace, and every detail is pregnant with spiritual meaning for the instruction and adoration of His saints. The Passover supper is interrupted to teach us that His relations with Israel are broken for the present, and that His present ministry is in relation to another circle of things in which Israel after the flesh has no part. To bring His own into this favoured place, He must lay aside His garments — He must divest Himself first of His heavenly glory, and relinquish too the glory that was His as Son of David, taking upon Himself the form of a servant, and stooping to cleanse and comfort their way-worn feet.

Such is the present service of Christ for His loved ones. It is not a repetition of the cleansing by blood that takes away the guilt of our sins; nor is it a fresh cleansing from the state in which we were as sons of Adam, and from which the work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth separated us and made us clean: it is cleansing from the defilement contracted in our passage through this world where all around is sin. We need this ministry of Christ because of where we are, as also for what we do. Defilement comes from positive acts of sin, but sins of omission also interrupt our communion with God (see 1 John 3:17-20). Where communion has been broken, the Advocacy of Christ comes to our aid, even as we read, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Through Christ's advocacy we are made aware of our defiled condition, and this leads to repentance and confession. When confession is made there is restoration to communion, for "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9; 1 John 2:1).

Although the advocacy of Christ is brought out in relation to positive failure, this does not necessarily mean that this service of Christ is confined to our failures. Defilement may come through occupation with the things that are seen and heard all around us in this evil world. The Lord Jesus had to pass through this defiling scene, seeing and hearing the same things, but every defiling influence was repelled by the perfection of holiness in Him, leaving His spirit untainted, but bringing grief and sorrow to His heart. If we do not repel the corrupting influences of the world, our spirits get defiled, and it is needful for us to seek the Lord's presence to feel the separating effect of His word and the comfort of His grace. So that we might be able to repel the influences of this defiling scene, the Lord Jesus ministers to us from the place into which He has entered. This is brought to our notice in the prayer of the Son to the Father concerning His own, where He said, "As thou hast sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world; and I sanctify myself for them, that they also may be sanctified by truth" (John 17:19). This is surely part of the service of the blessed Lord for us as "Advocate" at the present time. How good then for us to be fortified by truth, through the service of Christ on high, being set apart for God in practical holiness, bringing forth fruit for the Father's pleasure and glory. "Sanctified by truth" is produced by the word of God being applied to us, even as the blessed Lord used the water, not only to cleanse, but to comfort and refresh the feet of His own. The advocacy of Christ then would seem to refer to His present service of grace towards His saints in relation to their failures, to restore them to communion with the Father, but also to removing every trace of defilement left upon the spirit by the influences around as we pass through this world, which are not exactly positive acts of sin; then to His bringing God's word into our hearts to fortify us against every influence down here so that we might be living for the Father's glory.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Priesthood of Christ

The Priesthood of Christ The subject of Christ's priesthood is taken up by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, for he was writing to a people who were familiar with the religious system that God had given to His people Israel, in which there was a priesthood that had been divinely chosen and established for the service of God among His earthly people. In this Epistle we learn that the tabernacle system with its sacrifices was but a shadow of what God would bring into being in relation to Christ, the One of whom all the sacrifices spoke, and who would be God's great High Priest in connection with the heavenly and spiritual order to be introduced. A Merciful and Faithful High Priest In Hebrews 1:1-14 the divine glory of the Son shines out from His place at the right hand of God; but in Hebrews 2:1-18, the Spirit of God dwells on the perfection and reality of His Manhood, quoting different Scriptures from the Old Testament to establish that the Son of God was a real Man, and had entered into all that was proper to man while in this world. It was necessary for Christ to become Man in order that He might die, but also that He might be fitted for the place He would occupy as God's High Priest.

Only One who knew the practical details of human conditions in this world could truly enter into all that men felt in passing through the trials of life, so we read, "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God" (Hebrews 2:17). He knew what it was to be wearied, to be hungry, to thirst, to groan in His Spirit, to weep, and to pass through the most bitter testings; and to feel all with a depth and intensity beyond all that any other man has ever felt or could feel, both because of the unsullied perfection and holiness of His nature, and because of His infinite capacity as a divine Person.

Knowing every step of our wilderness way, and all that is involved for us, His mercy comes to our aid in time of trouble. He is faithful also, and can be relied on at all times, having been fully tested in the same conditions that we pass through. And He was tested beyond anything that we shall ever be called upon to endure, for He endured the cross to make propitiation for our sins, and in this work He was alone, the only One who could be a sacrifice for sin; but in this He was proved to be faithful unto God, and indeed for us, so that we through His work might be blessed. Of old, Israel's high priest had their names on the two onyx stones upon his shoulders; but now the names of the children of God are engraved on the shoulders of their Great High Priest, and the One who "Himself hath suffered being tempted" is able to succour them that are tempted. The Lord Jesus suffered in the many trials of a life wholly given up for the glory of God and the blessing of men; His life from beginning to end was one of suffering and sorrow, and He knows how to sustain His own in their times of testing. A Great High Priest A casual reading of Hebrews 1:1-14 will show something of the greatness of our High Priest. Aaron, on the day of atonement, passed through the court, and through the holy place, to enter into the holiest; but our great High Priest has passed through the heavens on His way to the right hand of the majesty on high. How very great then, in His Person, must be this High Priest of our confession. None of the principalities and powers of the heavenlies, who have sought to frustrate God's purposes, could challenge the Son

of God on His way upward to the throne, for, through His death, He "made a show of them openly, triumphing over them" (Colossians 2:15). On high we have One who can enter into all our sorrows, being "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," having Himself been tried "in all points" like as we are. We might well have boldness in coming near for help to the One who is great in His person, perfect in His Manhood, and was tested to the utmost in all points such as we are, and who has our names engraven on His heart of love.

God's throne, through man's sin, became for man a throne of judgment, but the blood of Jesus, sprinkled upon it, has made it a throne of grace. Entering God's presence, we find Jesus there, and from Him we obtain the mercy that will bring relief in the testings of the way, and the grace that will sustain until the trial is over.

Scripture is very careful to safeguard the spotless purity of the Son of God when speaking of His testings, for in all His trials He was "without sin." There was no sin in Him to answer to the testing; He could not be seduced by sin for there was nothing in Him to which sin could appeal. The Son of God chose to remain hungry, suffering in hunger, rather than give way to Satan's temptation. How much He must have suffered in realising the feelings of Martha and Mary, when He remained two days where He was, before going to their aid. A Called Priest

Aaron did not become priest of God by the will of man, nor by his own or by that of any other, but by the call of God. So also with the Lord Jesus, He is a Priest by the call of God, and this is plainly written in the Old Testament Scriptures, which were valued by every true Israelite. Psalms 2:1-12 had spoken of Messiah as Son of God, and Psalms 110:1-7 had said of Him, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

God has not forgotten what Christ has suffered in this world, the Holy Spirit calling attention to the severity in the words, "Who 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" (Hebrews 5:7). Only God could know the depths of the sufferings of Christ which found expression in the strong crying and tears. In His place in the Godhead, the Son had ever commanded, but He had voluntarily come as Man into the place of obedience, a place He had not known till coming into the world. We have to learn obedience because it is in our sinful nature to disobey; but it was altogether different with Christ, His only desire was to obey, and He was perfect in His obedience, but His obedience caused Him to suffer, and in His suffering He learned experimentally what obedience was.

Perfect in His Manhood, in His obedience, and in all things at all times, the Son was made perfect in His experience of suffering, and in His obedience even unto death, through which "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." How great was Christ's work, and how wonderful the results for us: eternal salvation, a salvation from all our sins, from all our foes, and that will take us into the eternal blessings that God has prepared for those who trust Him. All this has been secured for us by our Great High Priest, who has been called of God. A New Order of Priesthood

One blessed result of Christ's work and entry into heaven is that He has gone in as "the forerunner" for us. As surely as He has entered God's presence within the veil of heaven, we too shall follow Him. Within the veil, Christ is "an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec"

(Hebrews 6:19-20). In Hebrews 7:1-28, the Spirit of God teaches us about this new order of priesthood of which Jehovah had spoken in Psalms 110:1-7 in relation to His Son, David's Lord. In Melchisedec we see some of the features belonging to God's High Priest. He was not only a priest, but also a king, and "by interpretation, King of righteousness, and . . . King of peace." When Jesus comes out of heaven to take His kingdom, He will be manifested in this double character, even as is written in Zechariah 6:13, "He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

Melchisedec had neither antecedent nor descendant as a priest, there being nothing in the divine record of his lineage. In this respect, he is "made like unto the Son of God": for He "abideth a priest continually." In person, Melchisedec was greater than Abraham, for Abraham was blessed by him; in priesthood Melchisedec was greater than Aaron, for Aaron paid tithes to Melchisedec through his father Abraham. The fact that another priesthood was spoken of in Psalms 110:1-7 is evidence that the Levitical priesthood was imperfect and required a change of law, for the law of Moses made no provision for anyone entering the priesthood from the tribe of Judah, from which our Lord came, after the flesh (Hebrews 7:1-14).

God's promise to Christ in Psalms 110:1-7 was in the days of David, so that even then there was the divine indication that the law of Moses was being set aside in favour of the introduction of a new system, with a new Priest. There was no divine oath when Aaron was consecrated, which left room for its being set aside; but the new system cannot be set aside, for God made David's Lord "a priest for ever," with an oath. When God swears, that which He speaks can never be set aside. With the new priesthood there is a new covenant, a better one, of which Jesus is the Surety, the guarantee, His precious blood being its seal.

Aaron was stripped of his priestly vestments, and they were put upon his son, Eleazar, on mount Hor, for Aaron had to die; and death removed high priest after high priest of the Levitical order; but Christ's priesthood is intransmissible, and "He is able also to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:24-25). The Lord Jesus will bring God's people safely through the wilderness to the rest and glory of God, caring for them in every way, and interceding for them on high. The blessed character of our great High priest is found in these precious words, "For such an High Priest became us, who is holy. harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." God has taken care that the spotless purity of His dear Son should be left on record for us. He was infinitely holy, and never once do we find Him on earth using His divine power to harm anyone; only a fig tree was cursed by Him, to foreshadow God's judgment on a nation that bore Him no fruit in spite of all the care He had lavished on it. He drew sinners to Him, because of His grace, but He was separate from them in the holiness of His nature and in His life of perfection before God.

Israel's priests needed to offer sacrifices for their own sins as well as for the sins of the people; but the holy, the harmless, the undefiled offered Himself as a sacrifice for sins, ONE SACRIFICE, that needs no repetition, for the sins of His people. There was no infirmity about Jesus; perfect in His holiness, and altogether pure, He is not only Man, but the Son, and God's oath has made Him and consecrated Him a priest for evermore. The Minister of the Sanctuary In Hebrews 8:1-13, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews sums up what he has been writing on the priesthood of Christ

in these words, "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." On the throne of God, in the place of majesty and power, Jesus is sitting, the minister of a new, divine system of blessing for men, a system, not introduced by Moses as the mediator, but by God Himself.

Although Aaron was minister of the holy places, so far as we learn from Scripture he never entered the holiest in his garments of glory and beauty. The failure of his house prohibited his entry into the immediate presence of God, saving on the day of atonement in the holy linen garments. His appearance in the beautiful vestments of his consecration was only in the holy place to order the lamps, and to maintain the showbread upon the pure table. But Jesus has entered right into God's presence, and there appears in His garments of glory and beauty, for He is crowned with glory and honour, and He ministers continually before the face of God. As Minister of the Holy Places, the Lord Jesus maintains the light of the lamps on the pure candlestick, during the night of His absence from this world, in watching over His saints, so that there might be brought out in them, for the pleasure of God, His own traits of moral beauty, as seen in the features of the candlestick. He also keeps the twelve loaves before the face of God, for His ancient people Israel are not forgotten before God; they will one day be brought into blessing on earth on the ground of the New Covenant. The function of the altar of incense, which is carried on with the golden censer in the holiest (Hebrews 9:4), is that the sweet odour of Christ might ever be before God. When the saints enter the holiest, in the company of the Great Priest (Hebrews 10:21-22), it is not only to be occupied with the glory, the graces and offices of Christ, and all else that is seen there in the furniture, the veil, and the varied colours, but as thus engaged to worship God in the Spirit, and present Christ to Him, as known in the fragrance of the incense which was upon the golden censer. The Offering Priest

Christ's official priesthood did not begin till He took His place on high, even as it is written, "For if He were on earth, He should not be a Priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law" (Hebrews 8:4). But it is "of necessity that this Man have somewhat also to offer," and through the Eternal Spirit He "offered Himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 8:3; Hebrews 9:14). The work of the Lord in offering Himself on the cross was priestly work, for He was the Offerer, the Offering and the Offering Priest, but it was not in His official priesthood, for that belonged to heaven.

Aaron entered the holiest with the blood of bulls and goats, but Christ has entered into heaven, having become a High Priest by His own precious blood, and as called of God. All the efficacy of the work wrought for God's glory, and for our blessing, abides in Him in the presence of God, even as the Apostle John writes, "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Christ has entered in with a work completed for the satisfaction and glory of God, an eternal redemption (Hebrews 8:12), the results of which abide for ever, and shall be seen in the new heavens and the new earth; but He also entered in with His beautiful garments, "to appear in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24). He represents us in the presence of God, for our place is there with Him.

Under the Aaronic priesthood the work was never done, for "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering often times the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins" (Hebrews 10:11):

but in marked contrast, "This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." There is no need for Christ to rise up to do another sacrificial work, His one sacrifice avails for ever; and in virtue of this ONE SACRIFICE, He has for ever sat down where no other could sit, on God's right hand. In Hebrews 1:3, the Son sits down "on the right hand of the majesty on high" in the greatness of His Person, having a personal title to sit there; in Hebrews 8:1, the Lord sits down "on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" in the greatness of His priesthood; and in this chapter (Hebrews 10:12) He "for ever sat down on the right hand of God" in the greatness of His finished work, His one sacrifice. In Hebrews 12:2 God sets Him down "at the right hand of the throne of God" as His answer to the cross.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Prophetic History of Israel.

The Prophetic History of Israel. The history of God's earthly people has very solemn considerations for the saints of this day, for instead of learning from Israel's failures, and avoiding the grave departure that marked that nation, we find the church involved in yet greater ruin, having departed from a more wonderful place than that given to Israel. But it is very comforting to know that God knew all about these departures long before they happened, and in the Scriptures they were faithfully recorded long before they took place. Does not this show the great mercy and grace of our God, who cares for His people, with the full knowledge of what they would prove themselves in their responsible course. He points out their failures most faithfully, recording the details that men would have hidden; but He will not allow others to speak against them. If a Balaam would curse them, he is compelled to bless; if Satan would harm Job, God would speak of him as "My servant Job — none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil; and still holdeth fast his integrity." Again, in Romans 8:1-39 we read of the saints, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect: it is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? Our souls may well rejoice in the grace and love of God, which sets us before His face, accepted in the Beloved, and in the sure knowledge that in the day of presentation we shall be before Him, holy, without blame, and in love. The knowledge of these things should however exercise our hearts to seek to be here for the pleasure of God, to learn His mind, and to seek His glory. When Jacob neared the end of his earthly sojourn, he called his sons together to tell them what should befall them at the end of the days. Here we have recorded through the lips of Jacob, and by the pen of Moses, God's own unfolding, by the Spirit, of the sad history of Israel. Sad history indeed, yet it concludes with blessing from the Lord Himself. They were the sons of JACOB; they took character from their poor father, the supplanter, whose chequered history is so well known; nevertheless Jacob speaks in the conscious dignity that God had given him, as he says, "Hearken unto ISRAEL your father." Jacob's own history portends that of his progeny. At the beginning it was marked by deceit and sorrow; at the end it was graced by dignity and honour. Balaam, speaking the word put by God into his mouth speaks of Israel and his generation thus, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." His early history may be dreadful; but his last end is rich and abiding blessing from the Lord.

Reuben displays the natural strength, excellency, dignity and power of Jacob; which manifest themselves in the instability and corruption of the nation. Do not these moral features stand out prominently at the commencement of Israel's history as a nation? The forty years of the desert proved how unstable they were; yea, they praised on entering the wilderness, and almost immediately fell to murmuring; they were never to be trusted. See too the corruption that brought on God's judgment at the foot of Sinai, and in the matter of Baal-Peor. Nor do these features cease to mark the nation in the progress of its history, but they are the prominent features at the beginning.

Simeon and Levi. — Cruelty, anger, self-will and rage mark these violent sons of Jacob. At the recollection of them Jacob recoils, saying, "O my soul come not into their secret. . . . I will divide

them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." Do not these features mark the nation in the times of the Judges? The last words of the Book of Judges are "Every man did what was right in his own eyes." It was a time of lawlessness, self-will and lack of restraint. Who could have told that the words of Jacob, which appeared only to curse, would prove for blessing? So it was for Levi! This tribe was scattered in Israel for Levitical blessing, while Simeon was evidently scattered for lack of pasture (see 1 Chronicles 4:39; 1 Chronicles 4:42).

Judah. — A new phase of Israel's history opens with the sceptre coming to the house of Judah, in the person of David; and with this there is the assurance that the sceptre will not depart from Judah until Shiloh come; the Man of Peace, the Messiah. The public corruption and violence, that had hitherto marked the nation, no longer appear; there is restraint with the lawgiver. Israel submits to Judah, for "Thy father's children will bow down to thee;" and "Thy brethren will praise thee." The enemy no longer preys on poor lawless Israel, for Judah's hand is upon his neck; and with the majesty, dignity and strength of the lion, none dares to bestir him. Were not these exactly the prevailing conditions in the days of David and Solomon? But Messiah was in view, who would not only have the obedience of Israel, but also of "Peoples," the Gentiles. We know the result of His first coming: but His rejection by Israel and the Gentiles will not set aside God's purposes for the blessing of both under the Sceptre and hand of Messiah. The binding of his foal to the vine, and his ass's colt to the choice vine, may presage the lowly associations of Messiah with Israel at His first coming; the former speaking of His relations with the nation as a whole, the latter with the remnant, the disciples. The washing of His dress in wine, and His garment in the blood of the grapes. is in harmony with Isaiah 63:1-6, where He comes in judgment. The eyes red with wine seems to foretell the deep satisfaction of His earthly joy, when the judgment is past: and the teeth white with milk, the pleasures that are His in the rest of His kingdom.

Zebulun and Issachar. — The former was to dwell at the shore of the seas and of the ships; surely indicating Israel's relations with the Gentiles, the nations of the world, to which the ships go and from which they come. Perhaps this would mark the period following the removal of the sceptre from the land, and especially from the time of Messiah's rejection. Commerce marks the nation, for his side touches Sidon; but if this brings individual prosperity to some, it does not make the nation fat, for Issachar is a bony ass. Crouching between two burdens, he has come under the servitude of the Gentiles; and here he is content to rest. How clearly this marks the Israel we know in these days!

Dan. — No matter how low the people of God may sink in failure, His purposes will not be set aside: even as the apostle Paul wrote to the saints at Rome. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Therefore Dan's place in ultimate blessing is assured in the words, "Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel." Jacob is about to tell of Dan's terrible future as an instrument of Satan, but he can find comfort in the sure knowledge that blessing will come for Dan in the end. From Revelation 7:1-17, where Dan is omitted in the sealing from the tribes, it would seem that God has come in in government for the part played by Dan at that time; but in Ezekiel 48:1-35 we have confirmation of Jacob's confidence in God, for Dan's portion in the land, in the coming day, is clearly reserved for him. Dan's portion is the first mentioned, chiefly perhaps because he occupies the most northerly part of the land. But if Dan's portion is assured, it is in spite of his part in the dread troubles of Israel, after the church is gone; for this appears to be the part of Israel's history represented by him. Poor Israel has yet to pass through its worst troubles

and distresses, when under Antichrist, the instrument of Satan, the state of things delineated in Genesis 49:17 comes to pass. "Dan shall be a serpent in the way, an adder in the path, that bitten the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward." Does not this speak of a diabolical and treacherous part played by the tribe of Dan? Idolatry was connected with Dan very early: when Jeroboam set up his golden calves at Dan and Bethel. Therefore it would appear that Dan prophetically points to the time of the end, when Satan's power is manifest in the land, when the abomination of desolation is set up in the temple, which causes the fierce judgment of God to be poured out upon the apostate people. With the light of this before him, Jacob, in the spirit of the godly remnant of that time says. "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." That salvation will surely come, even if it means through judgment: "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Gad. — If poor Israel has been overcome and trodden down; through the salvation, for which Jacob waited, he shall overcome at the last. This shall come at the end of the "Tribulation;" even as we read in Isaiah 11:13-14, "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them."

Asher. — Following upon the triumphs foretold in Gad, Asher bespeaks the prosperity that follows. "His bread shall be fat." Israel enters the land with all its blessing from the Lord, to enjoy that which is spoken of in Isaiah 25:1-12 when "Jehovah of hosts makes unto all peoples a, feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow — He will swallow up death in victory. And — will wipe away tears from off all faces... Like Jacob, waiting for God's salvation, Israel will then say, according to this chapter. "Behold, this is our God: we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is Jehovah, we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." Responding to the salvation and blessing of the Lord, Israel provides Him with "Royal dainties." Does not the Lord tell Israel of the royal dainties in which He finds pleasure in Numbers 28:1-31? There He says, "Command the children of Israel and say unto them, My offering, My bread or My sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour, unto me." Then follows the daily, weekly, monthly and yearly sacrifices. During the millennium the sacrifices will have their true place, as Ezekiel 45:1-25 points out; not as in former times, when they offered the lame and the sick; or when their ways were so distressing to the Lord; but under the new covenant their hearts and minds will be truly affected by the thoughts of the Lord.

Naphtali. — Liberated from the bondage under which he served the Gentiles, Israel is like a hind let loose; and his free spirit finds expression in the goodly words in which he praises Jehovah. Look at the goodly words of Isaiah 12:1-6. "And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation." Here he uses the words that were sung by Israel, on the wilderness side of the Red Sea, after God had saved them from the oppression and bondage of Egypt. Israel returns, as it were, to his first love, to the goodly words that marked him at the beginning. It is the same tale in Isaiah 26:1-21 and in many of the Psalms; praises for the Lord, from His redeemed people, in the time of their deliverance from the hand of the enemy.

Joseph. — Now we have the scope and character of the blessings into which Israel are brought in the millennium; and the history of Him through whom the blessing is brought to God's earthly people. Who can fail to see in the opening words of Jacob, concerning his beloved son, the features which marked the Lord Jesus Christ? Down here, in Manhood, the Lord Jesus was indeed the fruitful vine, who gave constant pleasure to His God and Father; but whose branches ran over the wall of Judaism for the blessing of the Gentiles. At Sychar's well, this is most blessedly seen, where divine blessing flows to the poor woman, and also to the Samaritans who recognised in Him the Saviour of the world. And have not His branches gone over all the barriers of the ordinances of Judaism to reach us in this day? And will not His blessing reach the nations of the earth in the coming day? He surely and fully answers to the description given of Joseph in these opening words: He is the true Joseph. But Israel sorely grieved Him: He was a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. How often do we find Him as the mark of their hostility, reviled, persecuted, buffeted and reproached; all the outcome of the bitter hatred of their hearts towards Him and His Father. These deep sorrows brought untold suffering to the rejected Messiah, who was crucified and slain. Not all their hatred and hostility could weaken His purpose and resolve to carry through to the end the work that had been given Him to do and although He was crucified in weakness, He lives in power. He came forth from the great conflict of good and evil with His weapons unweakened in His hands. In resurrection, He is manifestly the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead. Thus were the arms of His hands made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; even as we read in Psalms 80:1-19 "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the Son of Man whom thou hast made strong for thyself."

Having come forth in resurrection, "From thence is the shepherd the stone of Israel." The Lord Jesus was indeed the Good Shepherd while here, to give His life for the sheep; but now as risen from the dead He comes forward as Israel's Shepherd, for their deliverance; even as we further read in Psalms 80:1-19 "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest JOSEPH like a flock; thou that sittest (between) the cherubim, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come to our deliverance." The Lord Jesus will indeed manifest Himself in the coming day as Israel's Shepherd, and deliver him from all the power of the enemy. Again, He is the stone of Israel. He was the rejected stone on earth, for which the builders of Judaism had no place in their schemes; but in the church now, God's building, He is the chief corner stone; and in the coming day He will have His true place among His earthly people, as the stone of Israel (see Zechariah 3:9; Zechariah 4:7). Messiah will come forth in all the might and blessing of the God of Israel; yea with the blessing of the Almighty.

Here we have the wide range of blessings that come to Israel through the true Joseph, in the millennium. There are the blessings of the heaven above, which superficially might speak of the sunshine and rain so essential for earthly prosperity. But surely there is something deeper! In Revelation 21:1-27 we are privileged to view the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. "Her shining (was) like a most precious stone, as a crystal-like Jasper stone; having a great and high wall; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are those of the TWELVE TRIBES OF (the) SONS OF ISRAEL." Do we not have here the heavenly light streaming down for the blessing of the sons of Israel? This is truly "The blessings of heaven from above." There are the blessings of the deep that lieth under;

the precious things that come from the bed of the oceans to enrich God's earthly people. The twelve gates of which we have read were "Twelve pearls; each one of the gates, respectively, was of one pearl." From whence come the pearls? Are they included in the blessings of the deep THAT LIETH UNDER? Is there peculiar blessing for God's earthly people as being in touch with heaven through those who have been brought up from such depths to reflect the divine light in that radiant scene? And is there not for the true Joseph Himself the wonderful answer to all His sorrows, in having the church to be the vessel for the reflection of His glory in the coming day? The blessings of the breast and of the womb speak naturally of the increase of Israel as a nation on the earth, and of the increase in prosperity among his cattle and sheep. So that heavenly blessing is coming to Israel in the coming day, but coming to him on the earth; earthly blessing is fully assured; and even the very depths of the sea are made to yield their quota for the blessing of God's dear people, in that day. Well might Jacob say, "The blessings of thy father surpass the blessings of my ancestors, unto the bounds of the everlasting hills." The richest and fullest blessings that can be afforded to men on earth, will yet come to poor distressed Israel, through the Christ they refused and slew; nor shall any nation or evil force be able to remove them from the possession given by God in that day, for the blessing extends to the bounds of the everlasting hills. Right until the end of the millennium will Israel have this favoured place. This is what men have sought to bring in by their own power and wisdom; by setting their own nation at the top and by seeking to subjugate all others; but here we are assured that these things will be brought in by Him, upon whose head all the blessings shall rest; yea they crown the head of Him that was separated from His brethren. The closing words regarding Joseph, and of course of the true Joseph, speak of His moral worth. He was a true Nazarite; separate from His brethren. There was no other like Christ. Every other man had dishonoured God on earth; but how blessedly the Lord Jesus honoured His Father's Name on earth, and brought glory to Him. Therefore all that belongs to Christ in the coming day; and all that comes to His heavenly saints, and to His earthly people, is the result of His rejection, but also because of the moral excellency of the Person of God's beloved Son.

Benjamin. — If universal and abiding blessing is brought in by the true Joseph, it is necessary that there should be power to subjugate all evil. This is set forth in Benjamin. The peace prevailing in the millennium is introduced and maintained by the rod of Messiah's power. Israel's enemies are torn to pieces, never more to rear their heads, as is predicted by Balaam, "There cometh a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and he shall cut in pieces the corners of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult." So also will he divide the spoil and devour the prey, for says Balaam, "And Edom shall be a possession, and Seir a possession, — they his enemies; but Israel shall do valiantly. And one out of Jacob shall have dominion and will destroy out of the city what remaineth." The power to destroy all who seek to do evil during the Millennium, belongs to the throne of Jerusalem, so that no evil may intervene to set aside the blessing that has been brought in through the goodness of God.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Red Heifer.

The Red Heifer.

Numbers 19:1-22. The God of Israel was a holy God, who could not tolerate defilement on His people, but who, in goodness, provided the means for the cleansing of the unclean. From Leviticus 11:1-47 we learn that God's people could become unclean through contact with unclean animals, and their garments had to be washed before they could be regarded as clean in the sight of Jehovah. There were many sources of defilement, both from within and without, and the detailed instructions that God gave show his great concern in regard to purity and holiness. He could not dwell in the midst of those who were defiled; they had to understand that "holiness becometh Thy house O Lord for ever." From these instructions it is not difficult for us to learn that, if God demanded purification from fleshly defilement in His earthly people, He will have true holiness in His heavenly people. We cannot approach God in communion or worship if we are defiled in our spirits or consciences. As Christians we have no more conscience of sins; by the blood of Jesus we have been sprinkled as to our hearts from an evil conscience, but in our practical life we are to perfect holiness in the fear of God, and before this can be done we must purify "Ourselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit" (2 Corinthians 7:1). On the day of atonement the blood of bulls and goats was shed, which typified what Christ would accomplish for the securing of God's glory in relation to sin and for the blessing of His people. Such sacrifices could never take away sin, but they pointed forward to the one perfect offering that enabled God to have before Him a company of worshippers, purified in conscience, with boldness to enter His presence. Because of the infinite value of Christ's work on the cross the believer stands before God as "Sanctified," and "Perfect for ever." Nothing can set aside, or interfere in any way with, the believer's standing before God through the sacrifice of Christ; but there is another matter of great importance — the maintenance of holiness as we pass through this world.

God has not only provided for us a perfect standing before Him through Christ's death, but also the means for our being maintained in communion with Him. Should our communion be interrupted by sin, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," who brings the matter before us, laying it upon the conscience, so that we may be led to confession, which brings forgiveness and cleansing. It is with this subject that the "Red Heifer" is connected. God would have us learn the great truths foreshadowed in "The Day of Atonement," and those of the "Ashes of the purification offering." On the day of atonement the principal sin-offering was a bullock; the purification-offering was a heifer. In Scripture, the male often relates to the position that is in view, whereas the female depicts the state. Our standing before God is in the efficacy of the precious blood of Jesus, the true sin offering, which has met all the righteous claims of God's throne, and satisfied His holiness. This was typified in the sprinkling of the blood of the bullock, once on the mercy-seat, and seven times before it. When our walk is in question, defilement contracted must be cleansed by what answers to the sprinkling of the water of separation procured from the ashes of the red heifer. The colour of the heifer was clearly specified, and as this was the only offering where this was done, it is of special significance. In Isaiah 63:2, the garments of the Lord are red.

It is a scene of judgment, where the Lord is pouring out his righteous indignation upon Edom for all their pitiless acts against Israel. The heifer is red: it is chosen as the victim upon which, in figure, the unsparing judgment of God was to be poured out. In no other way could God provide the means for the cleansing of His saints in their passage through this world of unholiness and impurity. Of the red heifer Jehovah demanded that it should be "Without blemish, wherein is no defect, and upon which yoke never came." These three features signify the perfections of Jesus. There was no blemish in Him; no charge could be brought against the holy Son of God, who was without blame, who was "Justified in the Spirit," and who offered Himself "Without spot to God." He challenged His inveterate enemies with these words, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" How gladly would they have done so had they been able. When they brought Him before Pilate, he was compelled to proclaim His innocence. What delight the Father had in Him who never for a moment deviated from the path of implicit obedience to His will. He was the only Man who could ever say, "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29), and as in spirit in Psalms 16:1-11, "I have set the LORD always before me."

Moreover, there was no defect in Him; His was a holy, sinless nature that ever responded perfectly to the word of God. Before His advent into the world, the angel spoke of Him to Mary saying, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God"; and the Spirit of God has recorded concerning Him that "He has been manifested that He might take away our sins; and in Him sin is not" (1 John 3:5). All the inward springs of His holy nature found delight in God's holy will; His desires, feelings, thoughts, judgments and movements all answered to God's mind.

Every other man had come under the yoke of sin, but sin never entered His holy nature, or ruled over Him. Satan was able to get a point of attack against others, but the Lord could say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Sin had no claim on Him, nor had it power over Him. Had it not been so, the believer never could have been freed from the bondage of sin (Romans 6:14-20). Although there is sin in the nature we have derived from Adam, and we shall not be rid of it until we leave this world, either at the coming of the Lord or as being called home to His presence, we are not under sin's dominion: as having died with Christ we have been freed from its yoke. Christ was the only one who could answer to the divine requirement, "Upon which yoke never came."

Eleazer the priest was to bring the heifer outside the camp, and it was to be slaughtered "Before his face," but not by himself. Christ's priestly work did not properly commence until He took His place on high, after His sacrificial work was ended; even as is written, "If He were on earth, He should not be a priest" (Hebrews 8:4). Nevertheless, Eleazer brings the victim outside the camp to the place of slaughter, and as it was slaughtered before him we are to learn that the priest is intimately connected with all that transpires, for in the antitype, the victim and the priest are one. As bringing the heifer outside the camp, Eleazer takes the part of the offerer, reminding us of the Scripture already quoted, "Christ who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14).

Death having taken place, the priest acts, sprinkling with his finger the blood that has been shed. In this ceremony, the blood was sprinkled seven times before the tent of meeting, which indicates that the only way of approach to God is through the blood of the One who was slain outside the camp. As we pass through this world of defilement, God would have us ever to realise that His

relations with us depend upon the work of the cross. His claims have been met by the precious blood of Christ, and only in virtue of that precious blood can God, who is infinitely holy, go on with us as we journey through the wilderness to His rest.

It was only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, that blood was sprinkled in the holiest. If the anointed priest, or the whole congregation, sinned, the blood of the sin offering was sprinkled in the holy place, before the veil. This was necessary for the restoration of the communion that the sin had interrupted; but God's relations with His people were not broken even if communion had been: His relations with Israel rested on the blood sprinkled year by year on the mercy seat, and before it. The blood of the red heifer did not even go into the holy place, for it was not our approach as worshippers that is there in question, but rather our dealings with God in our walk day by day.

Neither the slaughter, nor the burning of the heifer, is a priestly action; but both are in the sight of the priest. All: its skin, its flesh, its dung and its blood, were reduced to ashes in the burning. The judgment of the cross which Christ endured was a consuming judgment, and nothing less than this could have provided the means for cleansing the saints of God from the defilement of this world through which they pass. This should enable us to realise in some feeble way the awfulness of defilement in the sight of God.

Into the midst of the burning of the heifer the priest cast cedar-wood, hyssop and scarlet. When the leper was cleansed these same three things were dipped in the blood of the bird that was slain. The cedar in Scripture is the greatest of trees, and the hyssop a plant of little intrinsic value; indeed, they appear to be regarded as the extremes of nature, for Solomon "Spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall" (1 Kings 4:33). Scarlet, in which Saul clothed the daughters of Israel, speaks to us of the glory of the world: in mockery, the soldiers of the governor clothed the Lord Jesus with a scarlet robe.

We therefore learn from this burning that all the things of this world, from what is of great value in the eyes of men to that which is of little account, together with all the glory of the world, have gone from before God's eye in the judgment of the cross. Paul had the truth of the burning of the red heifer in his soul when he wrote, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). All the things in which the man of this world finds his life and pleasure will come to an end; but faith views them as already gone in the cross of Christ. Are we attracted by the world and its glory, or do we see it all as reduced to ashes in the death of Christ? The blood on the cedar, hyssop and scarlet, when the leper was cleansed, teaches us that the world and all connected with it is stained with the blood of Him they crucified and slew. The ashes, gathered by a clean man, were to be laid up in a clean place outside the camp. Is not the Spirit of God emphasising that all who have to do with the things of God must be clean? No service of any kind in divine things can be taken up lightly: we must ever keep in mind that our God is a holy God, and will have all His servants to take character from Himself. If God calls upon any of His people to touch the ashes — the means He has provided for restoring to communion those who have become defiled — they must themselves be clean. Even if we engage in prayer publicly, it is to be with the lifting up of "Holy hands." Those whose lives are not pure, or who have in any way become defiled, should not even engage publicly in prayer until there has been the removal of what has defiled.

All who were engaged in this work of purification required to be cleansed, for we cannot have to do with sin in any way without feeling its defiling influence upon the spirit. Even those who were least engaged, the man who gathered the ashes, and the man who sprinkled the ashes (verses 10, 21), required to wash their garments and were unclean until the evening. We must be free from every trace of contact with sin, even in others, before we can have communion with God, or serve in His holy things. The priest, and the man who burned the heifer, were most deeply involved in the service of preparing the water of separation, therefore they were not only to wash their clothes, but to bathe their flesh in water.

Eleazer, whose normal service was in the tabernacle, brought the heifer outside the camp to be slain and burned; after cleansing he was to come into the camp. God's holiness demands that those who are nearest to Him must have the utmost regard for the maintenance of purity: the slightest defilement on a priest could not be tolerated in the camp of Israel. The more deeply we are engaged with the service of restoration, the greater is the need for feeling the cleansing and refreshing influence of the word of God in our own souls. God has called us to holiness: Peter tells us that we are "A spiritual house, an holy priesthood . . . a royal priesthood, an holy nation" (1 Peter 2:5; 1 Peter 2:9); while Paul exhorts us to perfect "Holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). In the Epistle to the Hebrews the ashes of the Red Heifer are referred to along with the offerings of the Day of Atonement: "For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (2 Corinthians 13:1-14:14). The sprinkling of the water of separation had to do with a particular kind of purification, even from the defilement of contact with death. There were special ceremonies for the cleansing of the leper, and for the purification of a woman who had borne a child; these required blood sacrifices, as did also the Nazarite when the days of his separation were fulfilled. Some forms of uncleanness could only be removed by a trespass offering; where self-will manifested itself in the things of God there was neither sacrifice nor cleansing, the sinner was cut off (see Leviticus 5:2-3; Leviticus 7:20-21; Leviticus 22:3).

Even if a man touched the carcase of a clean animal that had died, he was unclean until the evening (Leviticus 11:39). It is one of the exceptional cases where cleansing of some kind was not demanded. Another exception is that mentioned in Leviticus 15:11, "And whomsoever he toucheth who hath the flux and hath not rinsed his hands in water he shall wash his garments, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the even." In the former case, the animal was "Clean," and in the latter the hands were clean. The washing of garments and the bathing of the flesh do not require the help of another; the sprinkling of the water of separation demanded the service of "A clean person"; the cleansing of the leper, and the other ceremonies which had a sacrifice, required the service of a priest.

How often we need to wash our garments! Our habits are so easily defiled, it may be almost imperceptibly, through contact day by day with a defiling world. It may be, as in this type, that our garments require to be washed through contact with sin in those we have been endeavouring to help. Has not the apostle Jude this in mind where he writes, "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh?" When we are more deeply involved with sin, so that the spirit is defiled, it is essential that we have the purification that answers to the bathing of the flesh in water. When the apostle Paul wrote to the saints at Corinth

the first time, he emphasised in the first chapter of his epistle the truth of the cross. Naturally, the Corinthians thought very highly of "The wisdom of the world." To them it was the scarlet, that which was so highly prized by men, but which was reduced to ashes in the burning of the Red Heifer. The apostle tells us in this chapter that "The Greeks seek after wisdom," and that God had said, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to naught the understanding of the prudent." Was it not in the cross that God destroyed the wisdom of the wise? It is the preaching of the cross that God uses to bring salvation to those who believe; and this preaching exposes the vaunted wisdom of men to be but ashes. The cedars of Lebanon were excellent, mighty and noble; and are we not reminded of them in those great men of the world of whom the apostle says; "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble (are called)?" And do not "The weak things of the world . . . and base things of the world, and the things which are despised" remind us of the hyssop, which was of little or no value in this world? Few of the great have been divinely chosen, but there are many of the weak; what characterises them as men in the flesh has gone in the cross of Christ, even as it is written in Romans 6:6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with (Him)," Paul, though one of the called, viewed himself in relation to what he was as in the flesh. with all his many distinctions, as "Crucified with Christ." In our chapter we have the special case which required the sprinkling of the water of separation — where defilement had come through touching "The dead body of any man." Numbers 19:11. Some details are given in Numbers 19:14-16, "This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent . . . and whomsoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days." As we have already noticed, there are different means used for purifying the unclean: the sprinkling of the ashes of the Red Heifer is confined to defilement contracted by contact with the dead:

We learn from the words of the Lord Jesus what contact with the dead means. When Jesus called a certain man to follow Him, he answered, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father": but Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:59-60). Man. in his natural estate, without divine life in his soul, is "Dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). Those who are called of the Lord are to be engaged with the things of God, and are not to be defiled with the associations of the men of this world, even if they embrace those who are nearest to us in natural ties. This does not mean that we are to renounce natural relationships, which have been formed by God. Into these we are to bring the grace of Christ; but they are not to be allowed to hinder us in the path of God's will. Nor are we forbidden to keep company with the men of this world, "For then," says Paul, "ye must needs go out of the world." Our call from God, "Unto the fellowship of His Son," has put us outside all the voluntary associations of the men of this world.

There are different kinds of associations in which the men of the world are bound together, religious, cultural, intellectual, social, political, and many others: the Christian's place is outside of them all. The tent may refer more to the gatherings of men for social, religious and such purposes. Do we not have an illustration of this in Sardis, to which the Lord says, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead?" (Revelation 3:1). This church portrays Protestantism after it had lost the spiritual power that marked it at the time of the Reformation, and although it had the outward marks of fidelity, it was possessed of a cold, lifeless formalism in which there was so little for Christ that He speaks of it as dead.

Spite of the state of the church as a whole, the Lord can say, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." Are not these faithful few like the covered vessels in the tent? In Numbers 19:15 it is written, "Every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean." Does not this suppose that there were covered vessels which Jehovah viewed as clean? Those who have received light from God cannot associate with the religious systems of Protestantism today; but it behoves us to be careful what we say of God's saints in it. If we went there it would be to defile our garments; but there are "A few" whom the Lord can view as being undefiled, though of Sardis.

Another illustration of this matter is found in 2 Timothy 2:1-26, where the apostle Paul likens the great profession of Christendom to "A great house," where "There are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour." We cannot get out of the great house, else we should leave the Christian profession, but we can be separate from everything in it that would defile our garments. The individual who would be loyal to Christ is to purge himself from association with vessels of dishonour, which means separating from the circles where these vessels are. Having separated from such defiling associations, we are to "Follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." In calling upon the saints to purge themselves, the apostle is really sprinkling the water of separation.

If in 1 Corinthians 1:1-31 the apostle Paul engages the saints with what was cast into the burning of the Red Heifer, in 2 Corinthians 6:1-18 he is again found sprinkling the water of separation, where he writes, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? . . . Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." This seems the answer to Numbers 19:18, "And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there." It may be that the 1st Epistle would answer to the sprinkling of the third day, and the 2nd Epistle to the sprinkling of the seventh day, spoken of in Numbers 19:19.

Paul was indeed "A clean person," faithful to the Lord and to His saints, and the meekness and lowliness of spirit that are pictured in the hyssop, which was used to sprinkle the water of separation, were much in evidence in him. Just before touching the subject of separation in 2 Corinthians 6:1-18, he speaks of himself "As unknown, and well known . . . as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and possessing all things." The clean person is also spoken of in Galatians 6:1, where it is written, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." But the spiritual was to take the hyssop and sprinkle the water of separation, for the spirit of meekness was enjoined. These two conditions are necessary, purity and the spirit of meekness, in the one who seeks to restore others, or his work is likely to be unfruitful.

Defilement is not to be treated lightly, and this is impressed upon us in the seven days that one defiled remained unclean. Nothing was done until the third day, then the first sprinkling of the water of separation took place. God would have the solemnity of defilement to come home to the conscience during the three days. This having been done, the work of purifying commences; and during the remaining four days, the exercise deepens in the soul towards full restoration, which is

accomplished on the seventh day. On the seventh day, there is first of all the second sprinkling of the water of separation, which completes the service of the clean person, then "On the seventh day, he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even." This is also found in 2nd Corinthians, for after Paul had sprinkled the water of separation in 2 Corinthians 6:1-18, he writes in the beginning of 1 Corinthians 7:1-16, "Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us purify ourselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear." 2 Corinthians 7:1. It is the same in 2 Timothy 2:1-26, "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." 2 Timothy 2:21.

"One that is slain with a sword in the open fields" brings to mind the words that were spoken by the Lord to Peter, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52). Here the Lord warns His own of the danger of adopting the weapons of the world. Such weapons are unworthy of Him whom we serve. But is there not also the danger of Christians becoming defiled by becoming members of political parties or of societies for the defence of something in this world? There are numerous defence associations: masters unite to protect their interests; craftsmen, like Demetrius the silversmith and his fellows (Acts 19:1-41) combine to safeguard their gains, and societies are formed for the protection of rights, children, animals, and many other things. The Christian is not to defile himself by touching such things. The three cases which follow may indicate different degrees of contact with what pertains to the dead, but defilement results from all. One may plead that he has not been deeply involved in the associations of the world, he has not touched a dead body, but only a bone — just some little thing. Another might say that his contact with the things of the world was not intimate, it was as if he touched the place where the dead were laid. "A man . . . overtaken in a fault" (Galatians 6:1) might illustrate the defilement caused by touching a bone or a grave.

If an unclean person refused in self-will the divine provision that had been made for his cleansing, "That soul shall be cut off from among the congregation; because he hath defiled the sanctuary of Jehovah: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean" (Numbers 19:20). Whether in Israel, or in Christianity, uncleanness cannot be tolerated where God's Name is owned. There are associations utterly inconsistent with the profession of Christianity, and one who continues in them has no claim to the fellowship of saints. One such association is referred to by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:1-33, where he writes, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils" (1 Corinthians 10:21). If any in Corinth, or elsewhere, persisted in associating himself with the worship of the heathen temple, he forfeited the privileges of Christian fellowship.

How careful we should be regarding our associations. God has called us "Unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord," and this is the only fellowship that God owns. As members of the "One body" we have been brought into living union with every true Christian on earth, so that we might enjoy together the privileges and blessings that God has given us. These privileges can only be rightly enjoyed as we walk together in holiness, and in the light of the great truths that have been revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Son of Man Glorified

The Son of Man Glorified In John 12:1-50 the Lord Jesus is first of all found in the loved circle of His own at Bethany where they made Him a supper, and where Lazarus sat in communion with Him, while Martha served in devotion of heart, and Mary in worship anoints the feet of the Son of God so that the house is filled with the odour of the ointment. Then we see a great crowd from Jerusalem hailing the Lord as the King of Israel, anticipating the day when He will come to His earthly people and be received with acclamation. Afterwards the Greeks come, and say to Philip, "Sir, we desire to see Jesus," and Andrew and Philip come and tell Jesus, to which He replies, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." The desire of the Gentiles to see the Lord brings before Him in vision the hour of His glory, when the church will share His heavenly glory, when Israel will be blessed on earth on the ground of the New Covenant, and when the Gentiles will be blessed according to the promise of God to Abraham, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Psalms 8:1-9 brings before us the glory of the Son of Man in the coming days, when the Name of the Lord will be excellent in all the earth, and everything will be established under Christ for the glory of God and the blessing of men. But the Lord immediately turns from the scene of glory of Psalms 8:1-9 to that which was essential for its accomplishment, saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit." Not only was it necessary that He should die if blessing was to be brought to His own, to Israel and to the Gentiles, but also that He might enter into His glory as Son of Man, the divine centre of all the glory and blessing that God had purposed. His glory as Son of Man rests on accomplished redemption, and will be displayed before the whole universe in the Millennium.

Quite another aspect of the glory of the Son of Man is brought before us in John 13:31-32, where the Lord Jesus says, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall glorify Him immediately." Here the Son of Man is glorified in going into death to secure the glory of God. Every other man who died received the wages of sin, but the Son of Man in obedience to the will of God entered into death to glorify God in relation to the whole question of sin, and to enable God to give effect to all the counsels of His love.

How brightly shines the glory of the Son of Man in the cross! His obedience unto death, even to such a death of shame and judgment, contrasts so blessedly with the disobedience of the first man. Every other man, by sin, had brought dishonour to God, but this Man, in suffering for sin on the cross glorified God, procuring redemption, which removed the barrier that hindered man entering God's presence, and enabled the redeemed sinner to view the glory of the Son of Man and the glory of God shining in His face.

Having glorified God in His death upon the cross, the Son of Man is glorified by God "in Himself." So that the Son of Man has not to wait until the day of His kingdom glory to be glorified; He is glorified "immediately" in being set down by God at His own right hand. Being glorified "in Himself"

at once brings out the glory of the Person of the Son of Man, for only a divine Person could be so glorified. Yet it manifests so wonderfully the place that Man has in Jesus, God's beloved Son, in being now glorified in the presence of God the Father with a glory that is altogether divine. From these Scriptures then we can see the glory of the Son of Man in three distinct aspects. First there is the glory in which He shall be displayed in His kingdom, when as Head over all things He shall come in His own glory as Son of Man, in the glory of His Father, and of the holy angels. Secondly, there is the moral glory of His submission and obedience even unto death, so that in the cross He brings to God the glory of redemption, meeting all the claims of His nature as of His throne in relation to the sin that stained His fair universe and dishonoured His name. Thirdly, there is the present glory of the Son of Man in the presence of God, the divine answer to the cross and to all that He wrought there for God's pleasure.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The True Solomon

The True Solomon

Psalms 45:8-17.

After God's righteous judgment has been executed on this world that has so long dishonoured His Name and refused to own His rights over it as creator, a world that has rejected His Son and spurned His grace, the reign of Christ as the Man of Peace will begin. Men have long yearned for peace, but since their rejection of the Prince of Peace they have had constant conflict, and in spite of all their pursuit of pleasure they have lived in perpetual fear of what was coming upon them. Man's day has passed, and Christ's day has come, with all its benefits for mankind, and for the display of the divine glory in Him whom God has exalted to be Head over all things, and who has taken possession of the kingdoms of the world.

Coming forth from the ivory palaces, all the garments of the King will be fragrant with the sweet savour of His grace. His garments display His varied glories, even as the colours and materials of the priestly garments of Aaron set forth distinctive glories of Christ. In the millennium, Christ will sit as Priest upon His throne; the glories of King and Priest uniting in Him who alone could bear such glory. All symbolized in the gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, will be answered in the glory that belongs to Christ as God's King and Priest in that day. The suffering love of the Lord Jesus, of which the myrrh speaks, will be fragrant to all around Him in His kingdom. None will be allowed to forget in the day of His glory that He was once The Man of Sorrows in this world. Myrrh was mingled with the wine offered to the Lord upon the cross (Mark 15:23); and myrrh and aloes were the spices used by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus in preparing the holy body of Jesus for His burial. The Spirit of God so often now engages our hearts with Christ's sufferings, during the time of His rejection by the world, and especially when we meet to remember the Lord; in the day of Christ's glory there will be the answer to all the suffering, and the recollection of it, in the sweet fragrance of the myrrh. In the aloes there is that which is bitter to the taste but sweet in fragrance. Death was bitter for the Lord Jesus as He endured the cross, entering into the awfulness of divine judgment, drinking the cup of wrath to its last dark drop. There was all the shame, all that the proud and wicked heart of man could devise to revile the holy One in the hours of His sufferings; and there were the combined assaults of all the powers of darkness. His was indeed a bitter cup! But how rich is the fragrance of the perfection of His obedience and sub-mission to God's will, and of the love told out in all that He sustained for God's glory and our blessing. This will not be forgotten in the day of His glory.

Cassia had its own peculiar fragrance, but it was compounded with the other principal spices to make the holy anointing oil to anoint the tabernacle and its vessels of service, and Aaron and his sons (Exodus 30:1-38). If, as has been thought, cassia was the pith of a tree, or shrub, it would suggest the hidden fragrance of the Lord in Manhood here, that which the Father only could discern and appreciate, that which was for His own pleasure in His beloved Son. But in the coming day the garments of the King will be fragrant with what Jesus was as the Man of His pleasure,

even as at His coming there will be the display in Him of His Father's glory (Luke 9:26). As He comes out of His ivory palaces the Lord will have the joy of hearing the praises of His people Israel. When He was on earth in humiliation there was for a brief moment the foretaste of this when, riding into Jerusalem on the colt, the Lord was greeted with, "Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the Name of the Lord" (John 12:13). Alas! this note of praise was very quickly silenced, and instead there was the cry, "Away with Him." But the day is not far distant when the cry "Hosanna" will be heard again, and in Israel's joyful praises the Lord will be gladdened.

Solomon made a great throne of ivory, and Ahab made an ivory house, but the King of kings will have ivory palaces that will endure. The ivory throne of Solomon was never heard of after its construction, and the ivory house of Ahab is only mentioned after he had died; but the ivory palaces of Christ will remain throughout the millennium, reflecting the glory of the Great King, indicating the stability of His kingdom, and manifesting the abundance of His resources. The Queen of Sheba, who visited Solomon, was an honourable woman, but the same could not be said of the "many strange women" that were loved by Solomon, and who turned away his heart after other gods. When the Lord was on earth there were honourable women "which ministered unto Him of their substance"; and such as Martha and Mary who received Him into their home, and the faithful women who "stood by the cross of Jesus." Whatever their birth naturally, or whatever their character before coming into contact with Jesus, these honourable women were, every one of them by divine grace, "King's daughters"; their relationship with Him put honour upon them, and gave them nobility of character and made them daughters of the King. The honourable women who ministered to the Lord on earth will have their own place in His kingdom, but the honourable women of this psalm have their part in the earthly kingdom, and probably refer to the distinguished cities of Israel in the coming day, as no doubt the Queen at His right hand refers to the place of glory that Jerusalem will occupy at that time. The cities that refused the Lord in spite of His mighty works, Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum, upon which the Lord pronounced His woes and foretold their judgment, will not be numbered among the honourable women in the day of Christ's glory.

Jerusalem, as the Queen, will be richly adorned in the glory of which the gold of Ophir speaks, a glory that will not be dimmed or taken from her as in her earlier history, glory that reflects the splendour of the Great King, and displayed in her to all the nations of the earth. In that day the kingdoms of the world will have become the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ, and Jerusalem will be the centre of His kingdom, and the place to which the nations will come to do Him homage. The favoured place enjoyed by the earthly Jerusalem brings to mind the unique place of privilege given to the church as the heavenly Jerusalem, from which the glory of God shines out in her whom Christ has loved and redeemed to share His place where He is Head over all things. This is the answer to the prayer of the Son here below, "And the glory which Thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one; I in them and Thou in me, that they may be perfected into one that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and that Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved me" (John 17:22-23).

Solomon's queen was of royal birth, the daughter of the King of Egypt, and Jerusalem will bear a royal character in the coming day, both as a King's daughter and as the Queen of the Great King. In Psalms 45:10 she is addressed as a royal daughter, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and

incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him."

Jerusalem under the New Covenant is called upon to forget her relationships and history under the old covenant in which God's Name was gravely dishonoured. The old city was destroyed after its rejection and murder of the Messiah, but the new city is in quite a different relationship with God, for His law is now written upon His people's heart, and all their former sins are remembered no more. When Jesus was here His people would not hearken, they refused to consider and incline their ear; but now all is changed. Instead of weeping over the guilty city, the King now delights in the beauty that He has placed upon her; instead of refusing Him His place as Messiah, Jerusalem bows before Him as her Lord.

Surely there is a word for our hearts in all this! Once we were sinners of the Gentiles, without God and without hope; but now we are graced in Christ before God, accepted in the Beloved, and richly blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. In Ephesians 2:1-22 we are not asked to forget what we were, but rather to remember, and having recalled all our former state and misery, we are to be occupied with Christ and with all that God has given to us in Him. If we are engaged with Him and His things, instead of the things of this sinful world which rejected Him, and still refuses Him His place, He will find His delight in us.

If Christ has brought us into a place of favour and intimacy with Himself, we are never to forget who He is in His Person, and the glory that is essentially His and the place God has given Him as Man at His right hand. He is our Lord, and as such the object of our adoration and worship. The Lord will not only be worshipped by the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the cities of Israel, He will have tribute from the nations. Tyre was a great commercial city against which God sent Nebuchadnezzar to execute His judgment. For this work the great Gentile king received payment from God in the spoiling of Egypt (Ezra 29:18-20). The daughter of Tyre no doubt portrays to us a new generation of merchantmen, who pay tribute to the Great King in the millennial day. When Jesus was on earth, the poor sought His favour, and to them He preached Glad Tidings. There were a few of the rich who sought Him, such as Zacchaeus, and who received blessing, but there was also the rich young ruler who though seeking eternal life, went away sorrowful. The rich who entreat His favour will not go away sorrowful in the coming day; like Zacchaeus they will value the company of Jesus more than their riches.

Within the ivory palaces the king's daughter is all glorious, adorned in raiment of needlework, her clothing of wrought gold. This may set before us the place of dignity and favour enjoyed by the godly remnant who have come through the time of tribulation in fidelity to the Lord. It is not the displayed glory of the kingdom that is now seen as in the queen in verse 9, but rather the place of intimacy within the dwelling of the King, where the adornment of the King's daughter is for the eye and pleasure of the King. The wrought gold tells of divine righteousness wrought in the saints in the Spirit's power; the raiment of needlework of the precious features of Christ manifested in the days of testimony for His pleasure.

Though Israel and Jerusalem are specially in view in this Psalm, they forcibly remind us of the relationship of Christ and the church. Like the King's daughter, the church is derived from Christ, even as Eve was from Adam; like the queen, the church is united to Christ, as Eve was also to Adam. The church will not only display the divine glory in Christ's kingdom, but will be arrayed in

fine linen at the marriage of the Lamb, the fine linen manifesting the righteousnesses of saints, that which was wrought for Christ in the details of the life of His own here below. The King's daughter may tell us of the godly remnant of Judah, which had the special trials in Judea in the days of anti-christ: the virgins her companions may speak of the godly from among the other tribes who, in different circumstances, were loyal to Christ during the time of His absence, that is, those in other parts of the land, and dispersed among the nations. All will have their part with Christ within the ivory palaces, in the place of intimacy and favour: just as the church will share with Christ the blissful intimacy and favour of His place in the Father's House. Gladness and rejoicing will be their portion then, His suited answer to their place of reproach, suffering and sorrow. A new generation, under the New Covenant, will share the glory of the kingdom. The fathers, under the old covenant, forfeited all that God gave them, and brought upon themselves the judgment of God; but the children will be princes in all the earth, possessing for the King His wide dominions, for the whole earth will have been brought under His sway. Israel will no longer be "scattered and peeled," but gathered around their Messiah, the Great King; they no longer will be "the tail" among the nations, but will be "the head." They will owe it all to Him whom they once rejected, but whom they will gladly accept in the day of His glory. The Name of the King, Jesus, the Son of God, will God cause to be remembered in all generations. So long as the earth remains, the generations on earth will assuredly know that Christ is the ruler over all the earth, His reign bringing blessing to His people Israel, peace to all the nations, and prosperity to all who are subject to Him. Any rebellion will be immediately crushed, and disobedience to His commandments will be punished. With Satan chained in the bottomless pit, the external influences from spiritual wickedness will be removed, though the old nature in men will still be there. Only by the suppression of evil can peace obtain on earth, and righteousness reign for the blessing of mankind. With blessing abounding in Immanuel's land, and the glory of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea, Jehovah's people, Israel in their place of peculiar favour and blessing, will praise their King for ever and ever. The Name of Jesus, once disowned by His people, will be fragrant for them, for then will they realize that He passed through all the suffering and judgment that they might be blessed. Then they will see the fulfilment of the words spoken by the angel to Mary, "Thou . . . shalt call His Name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called Son of the Highest: and the Lord shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:31-33).

Wm. C. Reid.

Royal robes shall soon invest Thee, Royal splendours crown Thy brow;

Christ of God, our souls confess Thee King and Sovereign even now!

S. The Will of God.

The Will of God. From the earliest days of man's sojourn on earth, the will of God has been set before him; and it has been his privilege and responsibility to order his life according to that will. When man obeyed God, blessing resulted: but disobedience brought its own recompense of reward. God has been pleased, not only to reveal His will for us individually, but has enlightened us with His thoughts and desires regarding the associations into which His calling has brought us. Moreover, He has unfolded to us, in the riches of His grace, the great secret of His will regarding the display of His glory in the fulness of times. How deeply solemn is the history of man, as viewed in the light of Gods will! From Adam down, it has been a long sorrowful record of great failure, with man turning from and rebelling against the will of God. Against this dark background, however, we are permitted to view God's well-beloved Son, coming into Manhood, and going into death, because of His devotion to His Father's will. In the Life and Death of the Lord Jesus. From Psalms 40:6, we learn that the Lord Jesus had purposed to come into this world for the accomplishment of the will of God. For Him that will involved a path of suffering, and a death of shame and judgment: but the doing of His Father's will gave Him delight. To the disciples in John 4:1-54 He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." Again, in John 6:1-71 He says, "For I am come down from heaven, not that I should do my will, but the will of Him that sent Me." Little wonder that we read in this Gospel that "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand." What deep, unbroken delight the Father must have had in this perfect Man, His own beloved Son, Who never thought of Himself; not of the alleviation of His weariness and sorrows, not of His own glory and honour; but only and ever of the carrying out of the will of Him Who had sent Him into the world. When the hour of the cross approached, and its dark shadow fell upon Him, His soul was troubled. The accomplishment of His Father's will, although it necessitated His entering into the suffering of death, gave Him pleasure; but how real to His soul was the awful contemplation of tasting death. In His deep trouble, He asks, What shall I say? Father save me from this hour? No! He would not ask to be spared that hour; He had come to that hour to secure the glory of the Father's Name in the carrying out of His will. On account of this, when in Gethsemane; when the cup of woe was placed in His hand, He said to the Father, "Not My will, but Thine be done."

Outwardly, it seemed that God's will had been frustrated in the death of His dear Son, for Messiah was cut off and had nothing; but before going to the cross, the Lord had stated publicly, "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." A new world has been opened up to man through the death and resurrection of Christ; and it is in this world, where sin and death can never come, that the Son has secured all for the Father's will and pleasure. In resurrection, all that has been given to the Son, is beyond the reach and power of death: Satan has no authority there; nor can he enter it to deceive, defile, or corrupt. Moreover, those who believe on the Son, receive everlasting life; a life that death cannot touch; and the Son will raise up, in resurrection power, those who have believed on Him. So that according to the Father's will, the companions of Christ are going to be

with Him in resurrection, to have part with Him in those things that lie outside of what is temporal; where He shall be displayed in glory; yea, in the glory of all that the Father has given to Him.

God's Will For His Saints.

Many Scriptures speak of the will of God for His saints. We have just seen that that blessed will has eternal life and resurrection glory for us; and Hebrews 10:1-39 unfolds that according to it, we are perfected in conscience even now, and have been sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. But God has not richly blessed us to leave us in the world which hates Him; indeed, "Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Galatians 1:3-4). How few of God's beloved saints seem to apprehend that He desires to have His people apart from the world's evil system, that in separation, they might be for His own pleasure. Oh that we entered into the meaning of the Lord's words to the Father, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." In Romans 12:1-21 we are taught that in presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, we prove the true character of the will of God. Every member of our bodies is to be at the disposal of God for His will. The bodies of the victims on Jewish altars would nevermore serve the will of any but God alone: thus, our bodies, not dead, but living, are nevermore to serve sin; but are ever to be at God's disposal. This is a holy service, acceptable to God; intelligent service, not dictated by the will of the flesh, but in obedience as led by the Spirit. Consonant with Galatians, Romans 12:2 exhorts us not to be conformed to this world; and it is by avoiding conformity to the world that we are delivered from it. But something more is required to achieve this; we are to be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so as to prove that the will of God is good, perfect, and acceptable. The mind plays a very important part in our lives. If the mind is occupied with the things of the world, we shall be conformed to the world; but if the mind is engaged with the things of God, the mind will be renewed, and we shall acquire new habits of thought; we shall think in different channels of thought, and the life in result will be altogether different. This is of immense import, and we do well to ponder it. Anything of the world that enters the mind; whether its literature through the eye, or its music through the ear, yields its quota to conforming us to the world. Does not the blood on the ear of the leper tell that we have been separated from this world, and the blood on the ear of the priest tell that God has claimed us for Himself by the death of His Son? God's will is not acceptable to the worldly Christian; it condemns the things he is seeking to enjoy. Such may believe and speak of the good and perfect character of God's will; but only those who have been transformed by the renewing of the mind, have proved experimentally that the will of God is good, acceptable, and perfect.

God's Will For His Church.

We have not only our individual lives to live under God's eye; but we have our privileges and responsibilities in relation to the assembly of God on earth, of which, in His great grace, we form a part. Is it not interesting and instructive to see how Paul is concerned with the presentation of God's will in the assembly epistles? He speaks of himself as "Apostle by the will of God" in both letters to the Corinthians; also in Ephesians, Colossians and 2nd Timothy. In 1st Timothy he calls attention to the command of God our Saviour; and in Titus to the commandment of our Saviour God. The church has been left in this world as a vessel for the expression of the will of God; the place where God's mind was revered, where He would dwell. When the saints are met together, in

assembly, their conduct and order were to be such, that if an unbeliever heard the word of prophecy, he would be found upon his face doing homage, confessing that God was certainly among them. Paul claimed for his writings, that they were the Lord's commandment; the very expression of God's will. Any who thought himself to be a prophet or spiritual, was called upon to acknowledge this. Those who speak of these precious Scriptures as being merely the thoughts, opinions, or judgments of Paul, truly expose themselves as unspiritual. The 1st Epistle to Timothy was written that one might know how to behave in the house of God, the church of the living God, the base and support of the truth. We are to support the truth not merely with lip testimony, but with lives expressive of the nature of the living God; and this in all the details and relationships of life. Elders, Deacons, old and young; all have their lives to live; and the end of all enjoined in the great commandment is, love out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and unfeigned faith. Such as Hymenaeus and Alexander, who made shipwreck of the faith, serve as a warning to those whose consciences are not exercised before God. We can well understand that if the affections become impaired, the maintenance of a good conscience will not assume its importance in its thoughts, with consequent effect upon faith. The point of departure of the church at Ephesus, where Timothy appears to have received this epistle, was in leaving its first love: Christ lost His true place in their affections.

Second Timothy brings before us the will of God for the saints in a day of ruin: where the church is likened to a great house, in which are found, not only vessels of honour, but vessels of dishonour. At the commencement of His public ministry the Lord recognised the temple as "My Father's house;" towards the close, on entering the temple, He speaks of it as "My house;" but in His closing words to Israel in Matthew He calls the temple "Your house." Although bearing God's name, the temple had lost its true character: it was marked by commercialism and robbery, instead of by righteousness and holiness. Is the church marked by righteousness and holiness today? Do men take account of it as the pillar and support of the truth? Alas! outwardly, the great profession is marked by the features of the world, from which commercialism and robbery are not absent. The Christian profession has Christ's Name, but it does not bear His character; it has lost its true character as God's house. Yet it is well to remember that there is a spiritual house, which is the work of God, where no failure can come, and which can not be defiled by man's evil.

God's Will in Relation to His Purpose. The epistle to the Ephesians develops the teaching of God's purpose, and was written to enlighten the hearts of the saints with the knowledge of His counsels. We have already noticed that Paul presents himself in the introduction as apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will; and in unfolding God's purpose speaks three times of God's will. In Ephesians 1:5 we are marked out for adoption, according to the good pleasure of His will. What wonderful grace is this that brings us into the nearest possible relationship with God Himself, into sonship. This portion for us belongs to God's eternal counsels, which existed before we had any being; long before sin had entered into the world. It was not to unravel the dreadful confusion which sin introduced that God planned this blessing for us; it was no after-thought with God; He marked us out for this most wonderful relationship to give Himself pleasure, and that the glorious nature of His grace might be praised in what He has done. God desired to gratify His own heart; and to do so He has brought us into the place where we can be eternally happy before Him, in the knowledge of His thoughts and in the enjoyment of His love. This place is not of our choosing; left to ourselves we would have got as far from God as possible: but God has brought us as near as is possible:

into association with His own Son, before His face. Such thoughts are too high for man; God alone could have conceived them. Our responsible course found us far from God, sinners in our sins; but in the riches of His grace, God has forgiven us. In the same rich grace God has abounded towards us in wisdom and intelligence in making known to us the mystery of His will. Many parts of God's will have been publicly declared to men; but He has given to His saints the secret of what He intends to do in the coming day. None can discover from enquiry into the course of the world what God is going to do. Doubtless, many can see that the present trend of the world is towards destruction, self-destruction, if God does not intervene: but they cannot possibly learn, apart from divine revelation, how all is going to end. Men may well suppose from looking at the world, that God has little or no interest in what is transpiring; but if they could learn the mystery of God's will they would know that God is greatly concerned with His creation and very soon, man of the first order will be entirely set aside, after having fully proved himself incapable of looking after his own affairs, and God's Man will come forth, to take all into His hands. Christ, the anointed of God, will not only take up the earthly things, but also the heavenly all things will come under the great Head, the Lord Jesus, Who will be the Centre of the vast universe of bliss.

Until the time of which we have spoken, God is working all things after the counsel of His own will. Even if things in the world are fast going to pieces, nothing is out of hand, so far as God is concerned. All the great movements that bespeak the failure of man are but working towards the end that God has in view; and it has been so from the beginning. Adam fell from his place of innocency and headship; Noah, the governor of the world lost control of himself; the Priesthood failed in the sons of Aaron, and kingship in the house of David and in Nebuchadnezzar; but God had a Man in reserve, Who as Head, Governor, Priest and King will secure God's glory, where every other man has failed. Behind all the outward confusion, which man has brought in down the ages, God has been working out His plan, and is still working it out, in view of the coming day. What God is doing may seem very small in man's eyes, for God is working in new creation, which the first man cannot take account of; but God's present work will be seen in its glorious character in the day when the saints are displayed with His own Son.

Filled With the Knowledge of God's Will. The apostle Paul prayed that the saints at Colosse might be filled with the full knowledge of God's will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, for only thus can we carry out the mind of God for us. If this blessed knowledge is to fill heart and mind, other things will have to be displaced; nor shall we desire to carry out our own will, or the will of any but God. Diligent enquiry in the Scriptures will result in the acquisition of the knowledge of God's will; and this knowledge will have its proper place in the thoughts as it is held in communion with the Lord. The Lord Jesus was perfectly acquainted with God's will, and lived by every word of God. Our knowledge of God's will is very limited at best, for we are poorly instructed; and in our practical life, we live by few of God's words. Still, the whole scope of the truth is before us, and where there is desire, there will be spiritual increase. When upon earth, the Lord said, "If any man will to do His will, He shall know of the doctrine."

Wisdom and spiritual understanding should accompany the knowledge gleaned from the word of God in communion with Him. So far as wisdom is concerned, we are left in no doubt as to how we may obtain it: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally." Spiritual understanding is surely received by allowing the Spirit of God to control all our thoughts, to form the habits of thought, to control our feelings and disposition of heart and mind. These divine traits

will help us to do God's will in the manner that pleases Him; for it is necessary, if we would be here for God's pleasure to carry out His behests in the Spirit of Christ.

God's will for His earthly people is found in the Old Testament Scriptures; but the "Full knowledge of His will" is found in the New Testament; and for us especially in the communications given by the Holy Spirit come down from heaven. How highly privileged we are to live in this dispensation, when the word of God has been completed; when God has unfolded all His thoughts concerning His Son, and His purpose in relation to Him.

If we are filled with the full knowledge of God's will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, these precious results will be manifest: 1. We shall WALK worthy of the Lord:

2. We shall BEAR FRUIT;

3. We shall GROW by the true knowledge of God. Our walk is connected with the path of testimony. We are not to conduct ourselves like the men of the world but taking account of Christ's example, we are to follow in His steps. No other path is worthy of Him, Who is our Lord, and Whose steps were ever taken in obedience to His God and Father. In doing His bidding; in manifesting His features; men will recognise that we belong to Christ; and we are to walk in this way to commend our Lord to others in testimony.

Fruit bearing is for the pleasure of God, and the Lord Jesus, before leaving His disciples, taught them how fruit, can be borne. He said, "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, thus neither (can) ye unless ye abide in Me." To abide in Him is simply to continue in dependence and communion with the Lord, drawing from Him the heavenly supplies needed by the soul; and this produces the matured expression of the life we have from Christ. Every babe in Christ has received His life. and this life is evinced in such: but at first it will necessarily be in an immature way, just as the bud on the branch manifests its life. As the saint grows in communion with Christ the rich fragrance of the blossom of the heavenly life will come; and then the fruits, so delightful to God, will be produced. Here, we learn that the fruit is to be borne in every good work; the good works that were found in their perfection in the Lord Jesus. A tree not only bears fruit, but grows; thus increasing its capacity for fruit bearing. The figure is here continued: we are to develop our capacity for bearing fruit by growing in the true knowledge of God. How blessed that we know God Himself, and that as fully revealed in the Person of His beloved Son, and in the wonderful counsels of grace unfolded by the Holy Spirit come down from heaven. There is no limit to growth. John shows that we pass from babyhood to become young men, then mature to fathers; but there is no limit to the knowledge available to us of God and His dear Son. Long after Paul had become matured in the full knowledge of God, he said "That I might know Him." Many things may come in to hinder growth; the earth attracts, the world seduces, and the flesh entices. If however, we set our hearts to do God's will, we can count on the help of the Spirit; and as feeding upon the Word, we shall grow by the true knowledge of God.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The Women in Matthew's Genealogy

The Women in Matthew's Genealogy

It is of considerable interest to observe that there are the names of five women in the genealogical record of Matthew, and although no historical events are mentioned in connection with a number of the men whose names are there, the Spirit of God has been pleased to give us something of the history of each of these women. The first of these women is Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah who, it would seem, was a daughter of the Canaanites, like her mother-in-law. Abraham had been most careful regarding the choice of a wife for Isaac, she was not to be a daughter of the Canaanites; but Isaac had evidently not interfered with Esau's choice when he took as wives daughters of the Hittites, though they were a grief of mind to him. Jacob was charged by Isaac not to take a wife from the daughters of Canaan, but Jacob does not appear to have been concerned when Judah was united to the Canaanites by Shuah, or when he took Tamar to be the wife of his eldest son, Er. There is much instruction for Christians in all this: how very careful we should be as to our associations, both for ourselves and for our children. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 is a Scripture on which we should ponder in relation to this important subject.

Tamar's husband "was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord slew him." His brother, Onan, also invoked the Lord's displeasure, in his dealings with Tamar, and he too was slain. Tamar had the natural desire for children, and was evidently content to wait till Judah's third son was old enough to be her husband, which seemed to show that she valued her place in the family of Jacob. But the action of Tamar in waylaying Judah was not one that sprang from faith in God, even if she valued a place in the family where there was the knowledge of the true God. Humanly speaking, the act of Tamar was more righteous than that of Judah as he confessed; but they were alike morally, partners in a grievous sin. Conduct such as this might suit the families of the Canaanites, but it was abhorrent to the holiness of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It might be difficult for us to rightly assess the true worth of Tamar. Her desire for children was a right one, and we can admire her valuation of a place in the family where God's Name was known, and the righteous and trusting qualities evinced in her patient waiting in widowhood; but her actions to achieve her ends cannot be condoned, both because of the lack of confidence in God and for the unnatural character of the sin. Her deceit manifested the natural scheming that is only too common among those who have been brought into a place of divine privilege; it savoured of the guile that marked Laban, and that came out in Rebekah and Jacob when they deceived Isaac. How apt we are naturally to seek to obtain divine blessing in our own way. In spite of her birth, her deceit, and her grave sin, Tamar received a place in the most honoured genealogical line in human history. It may be that beneath all the activities of the flesh there was a genuine faith in the God of Jacob, and a real, divinely implanted desire to be associated with those who knew the God of Abraham and of Isaac. Whether this was so or not, we do know that in the sovereignty of His grace God marked out Tamar, in spite of all that she was and did, to have her name associated with so many honoured names in Scripture, and with the most honoured, the Name of Jesus, the

blessed Son of God. Divine grace and mercy can rise above all that we are naturally, and all that we have done, to give us part with Christ before the Father's face even now, and to share Christ's place in the coming day of glory, and in the Father's house for evermore.

God has not only given the history of Rahab in the Book of Joshua, but the commentary of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 11:1-40, "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies in peace." What would be accounted an act of treason by men is viewed in its true light, by the Searcher of hearts, as an act of faith. Rahab believed that the living God was with the armies of Israel, and that Israel were His people, and she risked her life that she might be saved when the vengeance of God overtook the guilty nations of Canaan.

What a change it meant for Rahab! She left behind in the judged and ruined city of Jericho a life of sin to have part with the people of God, and to be chosen of God, not only to live in the royal tribe, but to be in the royal line, the grandmother of Boaz, who was to be the great-grandfather of King David. No provision was made in the law of Moses for bringing a Canaanite, under any circumstances, into the congregation of the Lord; they were to be utterly destroyed (Deuteronomy 20:16-17); but God's sovereign mercy prevailed in Rahab's case to bring her into a place of blessing beyond any-thing she ever could have conceived. And does not Rahab's case indicate what God has done for us? In Ephesians 2:1-22 we are called to remember "that ye, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh . . . without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Such was our state and portion before God's sovereign mercy reached us; "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ . . . For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Ephesians 2:11-18). The story of Ruth the Moabitess is well known, the Holy Spirit recording the charming account of how she came to be identified with God's people Israel. Herself a widow, she chose to be the companion of a broken-hearted, dispirited, lonely widowed-mother, whose sons had died, to share her sorrows and her hardships, and to sweeten the bitter cup of "Marah" by sustaining her with what she gleaned in the harvest fields. Her noble choice is found in the exquisite words, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." She chose a path contrary to nature; one that could only have been taken by the drawing power of God. Her sister-in-law, Orpah, took the natural way, returning to her people and her gods, and we hear of her no more. Ruth, with single-eyed devotion and affection turns to the land of Israel, and to the God of Israel, and her actions are indelibly written in moral and royal glory on the pages of divine inspiration.

Having cast in her lot with Naomi, Ruth was content to leave herself in her hands, first requesting to be allowed to glean in the corn fields, then obeying her mother-in-law in all that she asked her to do. Her happening to light in the fields of Boaz was no doubt directed, though she knew it not, by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings she had come to trust. Little did Ruth realise what blessings were involved in the words of Boaz, when he said to her, "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel." There was no evidence at that time of the blessings that were so soon to be hers in relation to Boaz, or in the distant prospect of her relationship with Jehovah Messiah, Himself. A Moabite, saith the law of Moses, "shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever" (Deuteronomy 23:3); yet Ruth chose to be identified with Israel,

and was accepted by Jehovah. Truly, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

Ruth had a very different character naturally from Rahab, for, said Boaz to Ruth, "All the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." But it needed the same sovereign grace to bring into the families of Israel, and into the royal line, the dissolute Canaanite, and the virtuous Moabite. Neither had a claim naturally to divine blessing; both were excluded by the law. It was divine grace that blessed them, and faith that enabled them to seek to be associated with God's people. With them, we have proved that God "is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us . . . For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Like Ruth, we have the present blessings of grace, and in the ages to come "the exceeding riches of His grace."

What happened to Bathsheba's children reminds us of the Scripture, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God" (Romans 11:22). The child that was born of David's sin was smitten by the Lord, and he died; but her second child, Solomon, was chosen of God to succeed David as King of Israel. When this child was born, "he called his name Solomon, and the Lord loved him; and he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah (Beloved of Jehovah), because of the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:24-25). It was Jehovah's love for Solomon, sovereign love, that put him on the throne.

According to the law, as the wife of a Hittite, Bathsheba would have no place in the congregation of the Lord; and we might have thought that her guilty relationship with David would have for ever excluded her from the privileges conferred by a holy God. She is not presented to us with the faith of a Rahab, or with the beautiful traits of a Ruth; but as one that in spite of the dishonour that stained her name, was taken up by God in the sovereignty of His grace to bring forth a child to sit upon David's throne, herself through sovereign grace a progenitor of Israel's Messiah.

We might have thought that some other wife of David should have provided the heir to the throne, one without a blemish on her character; but we are taught here, as in many another portion of God's word, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

God often chooses the most unlikely to carry out His will. Who would have thought that God would have chosen unlettered fishermen to be the companions of His Son on earth, and to sit on thrones judging the tribes of Israel? Who would have thought that God would choose an erstwhile railing, dying thief, to confess the worth and Name of the Lord while He was on the cross, and to speak of His coming kingdom? Who would have thought that God would call the man at whose feet the clothes of the murderers of Stephen were laid to carry what Stephen had seen, "the glory of God and Jesus," in testimony to the Gentiles, and to lay down his life in fidelity to the One he formerly persecuted? And who would have thought that God, in His sovereignty, would have chosen such worthless creatures as you and me to live for Christ in this world, and to share His glory in the coming day, and His place of joy and affection in the Father's House for all eternity?

Although Mary, the mother of Jesus, had none of the natural disqualifications of the other women in Matthew's genealogy, the sovereignty of God's grace was manifest in choosing her as it had

been in bringing the others into the royal line. She was not a Canaanite, like Tamar and Rahab, nor a Moabitess, like Ruth, nor had she been united to a Hittite, like Bathsheba: she was of the royal house of David in a descent that the Spirit of God has traced in Luke's Gospel, and she was espoused to one who could show his title to David's throne.

Moreover, there were the attractive moral features of Mary. Her ready acceptance of the angelic message evinces her quiet and simple confidence in Jehovah and in His word, and her meek and gentle spirit pours out its praise in the delightful words, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

While rejoicing in her blessing, saying, "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed"; there is no attempt to magnify herself; all her praise is to God who had so "highly favoured" her, the God who acts in sovereign mercy towards the poor in filling "the hungry with good things," and sending the rich empty away. He is a God who helps His servant Israel, "in remembrance of His mercy." The counsels of eternity, and many Old Testament Scriptures were to be fulfilled in Mary's child; and God, in sovereign goodness had chosen a vessel, and a suited vessel, for the conception of "the holy thing." Even the time of Messiah's coming into the world had been accurately foretold in Daniel's prophecy, and Isaiah had written, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His Name Immanuel." When Leah had borne her fourth son, "she said, Now will I praise the Lord: therefore she called his name Judah," which means "Praise." And how much more suitable were the praises that hailed the coming and birth of Mary's child! Praises from Mary, praises from Elisabeth, praises from Zacharias, praises from the heavenly host, praises from the aged Simeon and from Anna, and the adoration of the magi that God had brought from afar. Very soon there shall be a universe of bliss, filled with the praises of God and the Lamb, and all resulting from the coming into the world of Mary's child, the blessed Son of God. While awaiting our part in the praises of that happy day, for us the eternal day, it is our privilege, as knowing the sovereign grace of God that has blessed us in association with Christ to "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually," and, in the assembly, to join in the praises that the Son leads to the Father.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. The power of his resurrection

"The power of his resurrection"

Php 3:10. In passing through this world the Christian has not only to meet the trials and difficulties that are common to men, but has also to face the exercises and afflictions of spiritual conflict. Our conflict is "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." All these enemies were ranged together against the Lord Jesus at the cross, and through men Satan encompassed His death, but the Lord used the weapon of the enemy to completely defeat him, even as we read, "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death" (Hebrews 2:14). We should ever keep in mind that it is a defeated foe we meet in the conflict.

Simon Peter did not realise the nature of this spiritual conflict, and completely underestimated the power of the enemy. He was naturally a very brave man, and was very devoted to the Lord, but he had to learn that natural strength is no match for spiritual wickedness. The enemy, using a maid, defeated and humbled Peter, and taught him, and us, that only in divine power can we meet the powers of darkness in the conflict of good over evil.

Timothy was very unlike Simon Peter; he was not naturally courageous, but timid, and because of this was in danger of shrinking from the conflict to which he had been called of God. He required to be encouraged, and Paul strengthened him with the words, "God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power . . . be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:7-8). If natural bravery and strength cannot help in spiritual warfare, natural timidity in itself is no hindrance. What we need is "the spirit of power" which sets aside natural strength and natural timidity.

God's power can be seen and learned in the works of creation, and this leaves man without excuse as regards his thoughts of God, "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20). Yet, while the Christian delights to view the works of God in creation, and learns from it the skill and power of His hand, it is not by meditating on this that he is strengthened for the fight of faith. The most remarkable display of divine power that God has ever given was in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. There we learn "what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion" (Ephesians 1:19-23).

Satan must have been apprehensive when Elijah and Elisha were enabled to raise the dead, but no doubt the two who were raised returned to death again, and the fears of the enemy may have been somewhat stilled. How great his fears must have been when the Lord raised the widow of Nain's son, the daughter of Jairus, and especially Lazarus, who had been dead four days. Little

wonder that Satan sought the death of the Lord Jesus, the One who had power over death. How the presence of the Lord on earth challenged the power of Satan! Little did Satan realise that Christ's entering the realm of death would for ever break his power.

How well had the apostle Paul learned "the power of His resurrection!" Had he not much earlier written to the saints at Rome of "The Gospel of God . . . concerning His Son . . . declared the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by resurrection from the dead?" Resurrection displays Jesus as the Son of God with power, whether here on earth raising the dead, or raising the dead at the resurrection of the just and at the resurrection of the unjust. He is also seen as the Son of God with power as He comes forth from death, fulfilling the words He had spoken while on earth, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). This was the power the apostle desired to know in a practical way. He had spoken of it to the Romans and to the Ephesians; he had encouraged Timothy to lay hold of it; but he wanted to know it experimentally in the details of his daily life. What could the enemy do with one who did not fear death, and who lived superior to all his assaults? The more the apostle knew experimentally the working of this divine power in his life, the more was he made superior to every trial and difficulty, and every assault in the conflict. He wanted to bring the truth of Christ's resurrection to bear upon everything that he faced, and he had much to face. He was about to face Nero, but he was unafraid. His whole concern was to magnify Christ, whether by life or death. What could the power or raging of Nero do to one who knew the power of Christ's resurrection? The knowledge of the power of Christ's resurrection in our souls day by day will enable us to be superior to every difficulty, trial and affliction in these last days. Things are likely to get worse in this world, if the Lord tarry, and the path of the faithful will become more difficult; but we can be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and rise above every difficulty, and meet every artifice of the enemy as knowing the power of Christ's resurrection.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. There is a New Creation.

There is a New Creation. The work of God in creation is brought before us in different parts of the Holy Scriptures, each mention bringing out some peculiar feature for our instruction. Genesis gives its account of creation, and of God's preparation of the earth for man's habitation, with charming divine simplicity for the instruction, edification and delight of every child of God; its powerful statements of fact silencing for the believer the infidel voices that would leave us in darkness as to God and His works, and that would engage us with the speculations and theories that originate in the puny mind of the creature. Proverbs 8:1-36 speaks of One, presented to us as Wisdom, who surveys the building up of that which was to be man's dwelling place, where He, the blessed Son of God, would be found as Man to carry out the will of God for the blessing of those who would be His companions on earth, and in heaven for eternity.

Creation The Work of The Son of God. When the creation is attributed to One Person of the Godhead, it is attributed to the Son. Men have taken the occasion of the Son's coming into Manhood to dishonour Him, but God has taken care to honour the Son, and this is one means used, the revelation that it was the Son of God who brought the creation into existence. Three times over in the New Testament we have this blessed fact brought to our notice. In John 1:1-51 there is the statement, "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." Paul, in Colossians 1:1-29, observes, "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth . . . all things were created by Him, and for Him." If John surveys the vast extent of creation, Paul in Colossians is specially occupied with the spheres of ordered rule and government that owe their existence to the Son of the Father's love, "whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." When the writer to the Hebrews speaks of God creating, he says it was by the son, "By whom also He made the worlds;" and it is the physical universe that is before the mind of the Spirit of God in this Scripture. The purpose of the creation, according to Ephesians 3:9-10, is to display to the great intelligences of heaven in the church now, His all-varied wisdom. Revelation 4:11 shows that all things have been created for the pleasure of God. The Need of a New Creation. That God should speak in His word of a "new creation" surely signifies His displeasure with the existing creation. Scripture abundantly confirms this, for all that was connected with Adam has been ruined in his fall. This is taught in Romans 8:1-39, where it is written, "For the creature has been made subject to vanity, not of its will, the creature itself also shall be set free from the bondage of corruption . . . the whole creation groans together and travails in pain together until now." The natural man can never heal the ills of the creation; all his plans and activities will never take away the groan of the creature, but Christ will hush the groan when, at His coming, the sons of God are manifested with Him. The Ruin of the Old Creation. From Adam there has sprung a race of men, connected with him in the conditions brought about by his fall; all are sinners by nature and practice. Cain. Adam's firstborn, manifested the awful wickedness that lay in the fallen nature of man, when he slew his brother, and spoke offensively to God when faced with his crime. The disobedience, first found in Adam and, Eve, the hatred, insolence and violence displayed by Cain. integrated with the corruption produced by man's ruined

nature, soon made the world so vile and wicked that God had to cleanse it with an overwhelming flood. The Passing of the Old World And the Beginning of a New. The Apostle Peter tells us in his First Epistle that God "spared not the old world," and in his Second Epistle distinguishes between "the world that then was," and "the heavens and earth which are now" From out of the waters of the flood there emerged a new world, with Noah as its head. Alas! poor Noah's lack of self-control quickly evinced the weakness of man, and his incapacity to govern what God had put under his hand. Although God had given man a new world, it was still morally of the old creation, for although the earth had been cleansed, there was no change in the fallen nature of man. Every succeeding generation, and every fresh development of God's dealings with men, only proving that man in sin is incorrigible, and that the old creation was irretrievably ruined. Headship was debased by Noah, Priesthood was defiled by the sons of Aaron, judgment was perverted by the sons of Samuel, and royalty was dishonoured by the sons of David, by the kings of Israel, and by the great Gentile monarchs. Man's evil rose to its height in the rejection and crucifixion of God's Son; the cross exposing the enormity of man's guilt, and sealing for ever the judgment of man's world.

God Working — Amidst The Ruins Of The Old Creation. When the Jews persecuted the Lord Jesus for healing the impotent man on the Sabbath day, He answered them, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). From the time that God's rest was broken by the entry of sin into the world, He began to work afresh to bring in a new creation that sin could not defile or ruin. In consonance with His Father's activities, the Son of God came into the world to labour in grace, working for the establishment of a realm where God could rest in His love, and where there would be nothing of evil to grieve Him at His heart. Revealing the Father in a life of unwearied toil. He gathered around Him those whom the Father had given Him out of this world, and by His great redemptive work the Son of God laid the basis for the introduction of the world that lay in the Father's counsels, where His new creation glory could be displayed in those who once were sinners far from God.

God Working — Preparing Vessels for Glory.

According to the riches of God's grace, His glory will be displayed in vessels of mercy (Romans 9:23) — those who are formed and fitted by divine power for His own presence, made meet to be the companions of His own dear Son. Even now, in passing through this world, the saints of God possess in their earthen vessels a wonderful heavenly treasure, "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ:" but soon what God has wrought within them shall be enshrined in a "house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." God has already wrought in the saints with their glorious destiny in view, and this divine working has already brought them in their spirits into the new creation, where "all things are of God." Amidst the ruins of the old creation God is working in new creation, forming and fashioning the vessels that will display His glory and the exceeding riches of His grace in the coming ages. Regarding the pillars of the temple. on which God's testimony was inscribed, and other vessels and instruments of service, we read, "In the plain of the Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay-ground between Succoth and Zeredathah" (2 Chronicles 4:1-22).

God Working Preparing Vessels of Testimony.

God's new creation work has not only the coming day in view, it is for the present manifestation of His grace, even as it is written in Ephesians 2:1-22, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Good works can never be produced by man in the flesh, but those in whom God has wrought in Christ have divinely given ability, through grace, to work for the glory and pleasure of God. As created "in Christ" we partake of Christ's character, and are thus enabled to manifest His features of grace and beauty. How this magnifies the triumph of God! Satan doubtless thought that he had secured complete victory when men, as his willing instruments, crucified the Son of God; but God raised Christ from the dead and took Him to heaven, and wrought in men, producing new creation vessels in which He manifests the same beautiful features that had been manifested in their perfection and fulness in Jesus here below. The New Relationships. The subject of new creation in 2 Corinthians 5:1-21 is introduced with the words, "Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore, if any man be in Christ (there is) new creation." According to the flesh the Lord Jesus was of the seed of David, and although He will yet reign as Son of David, the relationships on that line were laid down for ever when He died. On the cross, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold thy son," and to John, "Behold thy mother." This was the closing up of the relationships that belonged to the Lord Jesus in flesh and blood. This was further emphasized when, in resurrection, He said to Mary Magdalene, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." These words not only tell us that the old relationships are gone, but also reveal that Christ's disciples are brought into a new association with Him, and into new relationships with the Father. In John 15:1-27 the Lord Jesus had spoken to the disciples of the favoured place of intimacy that was theirs as His friends, but not until He had entered into the new conditions of life in resurrection could He call them His brethren.

"Old Things are Passed Away; Behold All Things are Become New." The things that have been defiled and corrupted by men in the old creation have no place in the new creation, for nothing in the new can ever be spoiled. Everything in this new realm is entirely new; it is not a fresh start with the things that were ruined by sin, but everything is new in nature and character, and all springs from God. Nothing of man's conception or devising has a place in this new order of divine creation; all is spiritual and heavenly. The life and relationships are not after the flesh; the affections are pure and holy; the joys, blessings, riches and glories belong to heaven. Springing from the new creation are thoughts and feelings that delight in God and all that are His, and the disposition of the renewed mind and the desires of the heart are towards things that the natural man has never known. Not a single principle of man's world is to be found in the new creation, nothing of his philosophy or culture, none of the embellishments that adorn his city, nor any of the attractions that hold the hearts of men.

Reconciliation and New Creation. To bring us into the present enjoyment of new creation, God has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. God has come near to man in the incarnation, but this could never effect reconciliation; the cross was absolutely necessary if man was to be brought near to God. Through the death of His Son, God has brought us near to Him, shedding abroad His love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, given to us, and in this way completely displacing the enmity that once was there. As being God's workmanship, and as having been brought into right

relationships with Him, in His grace, we are free to explore the wonders connected with the new creation that centre in His beloved Son. With all saints, we are privileged to survey the vast extent of the riches of the Father's glory — its "breadth, and length, and depth, and height;" knowing that "Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Jew and Gentile believers have together been reconciled to God in one body, a vessel in which God now displays His all-varied wisdom, and in which He will display His glory before the universe for eternity." A Man in Christ. In 2nd Corinthians Paul records the experiences of "a man in Christ." 2 Corinthians 12:2. Earlier he had written, "If any man be in Christ (there is) new creation." 2 Corinthians 5:17. Now he views himself abstractly as a man in heaven, to the Paradise of God, where there is every-thing to delight the heart of the new man. There, where all is new creation, the man in Christ heard things that he could not speak on earth. These are the things that belong to the scene where we shall be at home, where our loved ones in Christ, who have been called home, are with Christ; but our present flesh and blood condition hinders our knowing the full blessedness of all that God has given to us along with Christ, for here we only "see through a glass darkly." There is much that we can know now, the things that have been freely given to us of God, things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man . . . but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). We know the joys of the new relationships, and taste the blessedness of divine affections; delighting in all that has been unfolded of the purposes of God, but apart from the full knowledge of these things, there are the things in the Paradise of God that cannot be known until we are at home there. The New Man — His Creation. When the Lord Jesus was on earth His whole course gave pleasure to the heart of His God and Father. There was the unique salutation, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight," because of who Jesus was as the darling of His Father's heart. This place as the beloved Son of the Father was the eternal relationship of Jesus in which none could have part; yet the life He manifested has been communicated in grace to us, and we have been brought into sonship with Him, for this relationship belongs to Him not only as a divine Person, but also as Man. Though as Man, the Son of God was "in all things . . . made like unto His brethren," yet He was a Man of a different order, "the second Man, out of heaven." It was God's purpose to have a race of men all like the Man out of heaven, and in the "new man" this race is made manifest. Because of the Law the Jew and Gentile were different men, different in their relations with God, different in outlook, religious ceremony and habits of life; these differences being maintained in the commandments and ordinances of the Law. But neither Jew nor Gentile could give God pleasure, so that it was His purpose to have an entirely new kind of man before Him having the features of Christ. This new man has been created after God in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24), and in him there is nothing of "Greek, Jew, circumcision, uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman, but Christ is everything, and in all" (Colossians 3:11). Not only are the distinctions between these different kinds of men not found in the new man, but not one of their distinctive features is in him: all his features come from Christ, and Christ is the life of all partaking in this new created man. The New Man — His Testimony.

After disclosing in Ephesians 4:1-32 that the new man is created after God, there is the exhortation to the saints, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak truth every man with his neighbour." From this, and the verses which follow, we learn that the features of the new man are to be manifested in all our dealings with our neighbours. Then follow exhortations for the saints in regard to their conduct in the family and business circles, for in them also the beautiful traits of the new man are to be

evinced. Finally, in the conflict, arrayed with the panoply of God, the distinctive characteristics of the new man, we are to stand here for God's will in the evil day. In all these spheres in which God has set us for Himself we are to present in testimony that the features of the new man are the traits of Christ. The Display of the New Creation.

God's purpose in quickening the saints and setting them in Christ in the heavenly places is in order "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus." This is the display of grace in glory; and for this God is erecting a Temple, a shrine, in which His holy nature and character shall shine forth in those He has united to Christ. The church in this vessel of glory, seen in Ephesians 2:21 as "A holy temple in the Lord," and in Revelation 21:1-27 as "The bride, the Lamb's wife . . . the holy city . . . having the glory of God." While the men of the present age are loudly proclaiming their plans for the introduction of a golden age, which their endeavours can never secure, and the professing Church, with Christ shut outside its door, is boasting of its progress and great achievements, God is silently building His heavenly structure of those that have been secured for Him through the death of His Son. This remarkable building is the very crown of God's workmanship, and long after every human edifice has perished for ever, this glorious church, conceived in divine wisdom and formed in God's power, will subsist in the eternal display of His love and glory in new creation. The Rule of the New Creation.

After discoursing in his epistle to the Galatians on the dangers for the Christian of the principle of law, and of how that all that God has given to us is by faith and in His sovereign grace, Paul writes, "For in Christ Jesus, neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision; but new creation. And as many as walk by this rule, peace upon them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." Israel boasted in the law with its ritual and ceremony, but these things, which were for man in the flesh, were exposed as valueless in the light of the new creation. That old order, which supposed there was ability in man to obtain divine blessing, has been closed in the cross of Christ; and an entirely new order has been revealed by the Holy Spirit in connection with Christ risen and glorified at God's right hand in heaven. Those who walk by the rule of law, which the Galatians were endeavouring to do, can never find peace; but those who walk by the rule of the new creation, who do not rely upon their own efforts, but on the sovereign mercy and grace of God, peace is theirs. May we therefore live by the faith of the Son of God, seeking the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and thus be blessed as walking by the rule of new creation.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Things Declared by the Holy Spirit Sent Down from Heaven.

Things Declared by the Holy Spirit Sent Down from Heaven. The apostle Peter in speaking of the salvation of our souls. which is now received by faith, tells us that this was spoken of by the prophets of the Old Testament. In the Scriptures alluded to, there are many mentions of salvation, and these were cherished by the godly ones in Israel. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, prophesying said of the Lord Jesus, that He was "An horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David: as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy to our fathers . . . to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins." Simeon, by the Holy Spirit, entered into the meaning of these things, when he took the child Jesus into his arms and said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Peter connects the thought of the grace of God with salvation, for the prophets enquired into the salvation who prophesied of the grace that should come unto God's people. Indeed, God's wonderful grace is expressed in the salvation He has declared. But the Holy Spirit has not only brought to light the hidden meaning of truths found in the Old Testament in amazing grace, He has unveiled mysteries that were hidden from eternity in the counsels of God. The Salvation and Grace Prophesied of Old.

Perhaps the first mention of the word salvation is found in Genesis 49:18, in Jacob's foretelling of what would befall his sons in the last days. The days foretold in Genesis 49:17 are evidently days of trouble and sorrow for Israel: days when the godly remnant would pass through great distress but Israel's consolation and hope are in the salvation of the LORD. God's grace and salvation for His people are displayed in Exodus 14:1-31, where in His great goodness He delivers them from the hand of the oppressor, and brings them into the wilderness to care for them. The failure of the nation, and the many occasions in which they find themselves in need of deliverance, but give the LORD the opportunity to speak of the salvation that He had in mind for His own in these days. Such beautiful Scriptures as Isaiah 49:1-6 : Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalms 6:1-10; and many others, enable us to see the vast field of prophesy spoken of by Peter.

Into these writings the prophets sought and searched; into the very writings. it would seem, that they had themselves written under the control of the Spirit of God. Interwoven with the blessing that God had prophesied for His saints, there were many mentions of Messiah, both as suffering and as glorified. Here was an enigma the prophets would fain have understood. They desired to reconcile the apparently contradictory presentations of a Messiah whose path to the glory lay through suffering. Moreover, they wished to know the time referred to by the Spirit of God, when He spoke through them of the suffering yet glorious Messiah. God, in His wisdom, kept from them the true meaning of these things; but in His goodness, told them that they had been privileged to minister to a generation to come. When we consider how the disciples of the Lord Jesus were unable to enter into the meaning of His sufferings, although spoken of in the plainest and simplest terms, we can understand the perplexity of the prophets of old, and realise that only a divine work in the soul could enable any one to understand these great truths. The Gospel Preached by the

Disciples. When the Lord Jesus stood before His disciples on the day of His resurrection. He said to 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, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." With their understanding opened, and later, receiving the Holy Spirit, the disciples were able to minister the blessed truths bound up with the death, resurrection and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. How powerfully did Peter and the other apostles preach these things on the day of Pentecost, and in those early days, when the Lord wrought mightily among men for their salvation and blessing. And in his epistles, the apostle Peter can say, "I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand; and "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glor both now and for ever. Amen." Grace and salvation were much before Peter. In 1 Peter 1:1-25, he not only speaks of the salvation of the soul, which we have already received, but also of the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, wherein ye greatly rejoice." We are about to enter into this salvation, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are most wonderful revelations, given to men for their present and eternal blessing: things that may well constantly engage our hearts and minds, so that we may grow in them and in the knowledge of Him Who has so graciously revealed them to us. Angels are great creatures, with exalted privileges; but here are privileges given to men, which angels do not have. How must angels wonder at the indifference of men to these immense revelations: things they fain would look into. The Exceeding Riches of God's Grace.

Towards the close of his second epistle, the apostle Peter, speaking of salvation in the long-suffering of God, refers to the epistles of "Our beloved brother Paul . . . in which are some things hard to be understood." Paul had a very distinctive ministry from the ascended Christ, having received peculiar revelations: and he unfolds truths that are not to be found in the writings of the other apostles. Much of what he writes to the saints at Ephesus is found only in his ministry. Ephesians 2:1-22 shows the present portion of the saints, as quickened in the life of God, raised up, and made to sit in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Here are wonderful truths declared, by the Holy Spirit come down from heaven; but these are not according to the writings of the Old Testament prophets, but entirely new, according to the eternal counsels of God, made known only after the Lord Jesus Christ took His seat at God's right hand in heaven. Quickening is not peculiar to Paul; it is spoken of in John, and by the Lord Himself: what is new, is the place that has been given to us by God, in the riches of His grace. We can now take account of ourselves as in Christ Jesus, and as seated in Him in the heavenly places. That is the place and portion which belongs to the saint of God altogether apart from his responsible life; it has become ours through the sovereign working of God. It is one thing to look at the saints down here in their weakness and failure, and quite another to view them in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Israel was indeed a very perverse nation, which grieved God sorely in their tortuous ways but He saw them in another light, in the light of His grace and purpose for them; so that Balaam had to say, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perversity in Israel." Again, with "The knowledge of the Most High" and "the vision of the Almighty," he sees Israel doing valiantly, and all the rest of the nations under the judgment of God. Thus, as seeing the saints in the vision of God, as He has been pleased to make it known to us, we can rejoice in Him, Who has wrought for them, and say as Balaam prophesied of Israel, "What hath God wrought " This blessed portion has been given to

us in the mercy of God, for the great love wherewith He has loved us, and is the fruit of His grace. To be rescued from the dreadful condition of spiritual death, in which we were by nature, is great salvation. Before God wrought in us, there was not a movement in our souls towards Him; not a desire after His blessing, not a response to the expression of His great love. From out of this our natural state He has saved us, in matchless grace; and this same grace has set us down in the heavenlies, in prospect of being with Himself and like His Son, in heaven for ever. But what God has specially in view in giving us this blessed place is, to display in the coming ages the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

God delights in mercy and desires to display before the universe the character of His grace. He has not taken up angels for this, but men who once were sinners far from Him: who were dead in trespasses and, in sins. Why did He, in sovereign mercy, lay hold of the chief of sinners, who was persecuting His Son? Surely it was to display in him, in the coming ages, the exceeding riches of His grace. And in that wonderful display there will be myriads of saints; every one taken out of this world, rescued from the dreadful state of death in which mercy found him, and every one there a monument of what God's rich grace has wrought. Nor has God simply brought each and all from the wreckage of human nature, but He has given them the very best place in heaven along with His Son. It would have been wonderful grace, had we been forgiven our sins, and been left on earth for ever in our mixed condition: and such a place might well have satisfied us; but it could not have satisfied the heart of God. He wanted us in the best place along with His own dear Son; His love resting on us, as it rests on Him and in the same glory in which His Christ is displayed. When the great intelligences of the universe (and all who are able to see the church along with Christ in the coming ages) gaze upon Christ in His glory, and see the church united to Him, they will see expressed in the great kindness of God towards us, the exceeding riches of His grace.

Faith has brought us into divine blessing; it has enabled us to lay hold of that which God presented to us in the Gospel. Yet even this is God's gift. God would have us even now to realise that our salvation is entirely the fruit of His grace, so that it might affect us while here. Man's working could only procure for him the judgment of death, as witnessed in the law: but God has wrought for His own glory, to secure His will in us, while awaiting the display of the coming ages. So that the workmanship that is going to bring us out in glory with Christ, enables us down here to walk in the path that God has marked out for us, a path of good works. According to God's working, the saints are formed into one new man; and we have been reconciled to God in one body by the cross. Now, Christ has opened up the way for us to the Father's presence, where we can approach by one Spirit. How great are the blessings and privileges given to us by God, in the things declared by the Holy Spirit, sent down from heaven: we have a place in Christ Jesus in the heavenlies in view of the display of the coming ages; we are God's workmanship, to come out for His pleasure in the path of His will; and we have access into His presence, to commune with Him regarding the wonderful revelations communicated to us, and to worship before Him in the power of the Holy Spirit.

God's Revelation to the New Testament Apostles and Prophets.

If the prophets of old were permitted to speak of the grace to be brought to the saints in these days; it is not to be wondered at that God reserved something special for the apostles and the prophets of the present dispensation. Paul, in Ephesians 3:1-21 writes of "The administration of

the grace of God which has been given to me towards you, that by revelation the mystery has been made known to me." The administration of this wonderful grace was towards the saints, for God was mindful to bless His people with the greatest of blessings, and to enrich them with the most glorious revelations. To the apostle Paul, the ministry of the mystery was committed: it was peculiarly his; but the revelation of this precious truth had also been given to Christ's "Holy apostles and prophets in the power of the Spirit." Moreover, the Spirit of God is careful to observe that this mystery had "not been made known to the sons of men" in other generations; it was so precious to the heart of God that He hid it in HIMSELF from eternal ages. We do well therefore to enquire diligently and with becoming reverence into this great secret, which God has now made known to His saints. The three parts of the mystery as unfolded here are: firstly, that the Gentiles should be joint-heirs with the believing Jews; secondly, that Jew and Gentile should together form a joint-body; thirdly, that Jew and Gentile should jointly partake in God's promise by the Gospel. The inheritance spoken of here is not that promised to Abraham. In that earthly heritage Israel will be supreme and the Gentiles will come in to blessing on that ground, with perhaps Egypt and Assyria in a special place (Isaiah 19:25). Here we have the great inheritance of which Christ is the heir, and in which, in the grace of God, we are joint-heirs with Him. Ephesians 1:1-23 of this epistle shows that God has given us an inheritance in Christ: here we learn further that Jew and Gentile come into the inheritance on exactly the same footing. Israel's blessing is earthly, and every Israelite who believes the Gospel in this dispensation, receives the blessing of God on a much higher plane than that of Israel's earthly calling. This it was that disturbed the religious Jew. He could not bear the thought of the Gentile being on the same ground as Israel; but little did he conceive that both were on a plane infinitely higher than mortal could have imagined. Association in the inheritance of God with God's own Son surely surpasses the most exalted of all human thoughts.

Search throughout the pages of the Old Testament and not a single mention will be found of Jew and Gentile forming a joint-body. On the earth, at this moment, there is a living organism, which God has formed, in which the life of His dear Son is expressed. And in the body of Christ, composed of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, there will be the expression of the mind of the Head, in the coming ages. How our souls should delight in this wonderful revelation! Should our lives not be governed by such great truths now? So many acknowledge that there is the truth of the one body; yet so few order their lives in the light of it: so few came under its power. These great truths are not only given to be held and ministered as dogmatic doctrines; but are to control all our movements, in relation to our individual path, and in relation to the affairs of God's assembly. This chapter commences with "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." He was a prisoner because his ministry and life were controlled by the truth of the mystery. His preaching of Jesus Christ was not confined to the law and the prophets, but was "according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now . . . made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." Oh that our lives were more deeply affected by this great revelation.

God's promise in Christ by the Gospel is for Jew and Gentile alike, without distinction and discrimination. The promises for the earthly people await the coming day, but here is something of a different order. Christianity has brought in what is entirely outside of dispensations, and this, God, in His wonderful love has given to us. To Titus, Paul speaks of this promise, saying, "In hope

of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began, but hath in due times manifested His word through preaching, which is committed unto me." Of this eternal life, John says, "And this is the promise that He hath promised us, life eternal."

We have noticed that Paul's preaching of Jesus Christ had its own peculiar character. In this chapter he tells that divine grace was given to him to "preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." The prophets of old told out the searchable riches of Israel's earthly Messiah, whose glory would fill the land, and cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; but how transcendently great are the glories of the heavenly Christ, of Him Who is the Head of the body, the assembly. Who can comprehend the glories of Him Who is the Head over all things; Who is the Head of every principality and authority: Who has gone far above all heavens to fill all things; Who is the beginning of the new creation; Who is the firstborn of all the creation, and firstborn of the resurrection world? What a great and glorious Person the Son of God is! And how surpassing wonderful that God has associated with Him those who once were sinners of the Jews and the Gentiles!

These are things indeed that angels desire to look into. How much or how little God permits the angelic beings to know, we cannot say; but here we are told that, He has created all things "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." To have part in that which now displays God's all varied wisdom is ours. Should it not bring us down on our faces before God in worship!

Wm. C. Reid.

Eye has not seen these things, ear has not heard of them, Never has fancy the fringes of them reached;

Never to creature was uttered a word of them, Till by the Spirit the Gospel was preached.

Then in its glorious might broke forth the living Light Darkness assailing:

Then from the heights above shone forth the thought of love, Then the unveiling.

S. This Sickness is not unto Death.

This Sickness is not unto Death.

How greatly blest are they who have the knowledge of the Son of God; what joy in knowing Him as the revealer of the Father; what comfort in knowing Him on the risen side of death. We have to do with One Who knows the end from the beginning, and Who watches over every exercise of our poor hearts so that we may reap the rich blessing He has for us in every circumstance of life, be it trying, painful, or sorrowful. Little did Martha and Mary know what the Lord had in store for them through the deep trial of the sickness and death of their brother Lazarus. They knew that the Lord loved Lazarus, and were doubtless conscious of what we are told, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus;" but if conscious of His love they had still to learn of His glory as Son of God; and how blessed for them, even if painful for the moment, that the glory of God and the glory of the Son of God were bound up with the sickness and death of their loved one. The sickness of Lazarus looked at naturally was indeed a sickness unto death, yet the blessed Lord said "This sickness is not unto death," for death was not the great end in view, only the means of bringing out into display the glory of God and His Son. Divine glory was about to be manifested in resurrection power, and how great the grace that had chosen Lazarus as the subject of it. Martha and Mary could not then know what was about to transpire, but how different with us today who have learned through the events of that day, and through all that has taken place in connection with the death and resurrection of the Lord Himself; we can face similar circumstances in the full knowledge that the glory of God and the glory of the Son of God are bound up with the trials of His loved ones. What rest of spirit, what comfort of heart, does this knowledge bring to us in all the distresses, sorrows, and perplexities of the present scene. It does not make us insensible to the sorrows or remove the grief that bereavement brings, but it brings the Son of God into the circumstances and lifts the spirit into His presence. No doubt the sorrowing sisters would expect Jesus to hasten to Bethany on receipt of the news, and the delay for two days in the place where Jesus was would be inexplicable also to the disciples, but the Lord had already told them that the glory of God was bound up with the sickness of Lazarus, and this was the secret of His waiting. All the while His eye and heart were engaged with what was transpiring at the loved home at Bethany; and when the moment of death's entry came He observed it, His heart entering into the sorrow of the loved ones. Because of this He could say to the disciples, "Lazarus, our friend, is fallen asleep." What wonderful divine teaching for the disciples; they were being taught by the Son of God that death for the Christian is but sleep; not sleep for the soul, but sleep for the body. This is brought out plainly in the teaching of the Spirit, for when Stephens spirit is received by the Lord Jesus "he fell asleep;" and the saints of Thessalonica who had died were "fallen asleep through Jesus." But those that sleep through Jesus will soon awake from the sleep of death: God is about to bring them out of heaven in glory with Jesus: and to manifest the power that will bring this to pass the Lord said to the disciples regarding Lazarus, "I go that I may awake him out of sleep." It is not surprising that the disciples did not enter into the meaning of the Lord's words, for like ourselves, they were slow to understand the things pertaining to the new sphere the Lord was opening out to

them. But He is a most patient Teacher, so tells them plainly that Lazarus had died. What an opportunity for their faith to lay hold of: Lazarus is dead and Jesus is going to wake him up from the sleep of death. They are not up to this, their faith is weak: but Jesus can rejoice in the occasion that will make known to them the power of God and the glory of His Person as something for their faith to rest on. And it is this that brings to us the great gain of death. If there is the deep sorrow, there is the great consolation of Jesus but there is the joy that perceives death as that which gives the blessed Lord the occasion for the manifestation of the glory of His Person, the completeness of His power over it, and the final triumph in which He will destroy it as the last enemy. All this has been signified in "Lazarus OUR FRIEND." And how often has the preciousness of the truth concerning the outshining of the glory of the Son of God, been known and the power of His blessed Person Who sets death aside, when of some loved one in Christ it has been said, "OUR FRIEND SLEEPETH." How sweet and touching are these words from the lips of the Son of God: He recognises the friendship of the loved circle in Bethany, where His spirit was refreshed in the company of those who valued Him.

Coming to Bethany, Jesus is greeted by Martha with these words, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died: but even now I know, that whatsoever Thou shalt ask of God, God will give Thee." These were remarkable words, clearly telling of faith in the Lord's ability to hinder the working of death, and apparently suggesting faith in anything the Lord would ask His Father for. But when under test poor Martha's faith does not reach to the heights suggested in her words. She believed that her brother would rise again, even as Jesus had said, but she can only see resurrection connected with the last day, not with the Person of the Son of God present before her. Then when the Lord speaks of Himself thus, and asks if she believed it, she assents that she believes in Him as presented in the prophecy of Psalms 2:1-12. Evidently feeling that the precious communications of Jesus were beyond her, and doubtless thinking that Mary could commune with Him in them, she goes to her sister, who knew what it was to sit at Jesus' feet to hear His word, saying "The Teacher is come and calls thee."

Martha had professed faith for anything that the Son would ask: and this is what He was going to ask for. "Thy brother shall rise again." Jesus had already told the disciples that He was going to awake Lazarus from his sleep; now He tells the same thing to Martha; but neither the disciples, who can only think of dying with Jesus, nor Martha, who can only look on to the last day for resurrection, can perceive in Him "the resurrection and the life." The mighty power of resurrection was there in Him Who stood before them; He was the originator of life, and came into the world to communicate a life that death could not touch. What a different aspect things down here bear for those who see in the Son of God One Who has power to set aside all the dread results of death, and Who has brought into this world the light of a scene where death cannot come, and Who gives even now the eternal life to those who believe in Him.

Alas! He had to say to the Jews, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Men will not own the Son as the resurrection and the life: they have not eyes to discern His glory or to perceive the greatness of His Person. But He had not only brought light into the world, He had come that "they which see not may see;" and His work of grace and power in John 9:1-41 is the effect of this. Now He says, "He that believes on Me, though he have died, shall live and every one who lives and believes on Me shall never die." There was not only power in Him to bring men out of their graves, but He had power to bring them into life: an entirely new kind of life that man after the flesh knows

nothing of. This He will do for every one who believes in Him. The resurrection of Lazarus was the indication, the manifestation of the power and glory of Him Who would accomplish for His own all that He had spoken. The dead in Christ will assuredly be raised and brought in their glorified bodies into heavenly life with the Son of God; for He is not only the resurrection, but also the LIFE. The dead out of Christ will also be raised, but they will not have part in the RESURRECTION OF LIFE.

There are also those who live: and the mighty power of the Son of God will be exercised in them also. We have to await the coming of the Holy Spirit to get the details of what the Lord speaks of here. The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says, "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51). Those who live, at the time of the coming of the Lord for His own, believing in the Son of God, will not be touched by death, but will receive the quickening touch of the Son of God that will change their bodies into His likeness. But is there not another view of this precious passage of Scripture, "He that . . . believes on me shall never die" in line with what the Lord had said earlier, "He that keepeth my word shall never see death" (8:51)? Can we not have by faith the present sense in our souls that we have received from the Son of God a life on which death has no claim and over which it has no power? This life is not seen or known by the natural man, and only faith in the believer can lay hold of it; but it is a living present reality for us in the Son of God, and in the measure of our communion with Him shall we live in the enjoyment and power of this heavenly life, and realise that we have what death can never touch. When Mary comes to Jesus she repeats the words that Martha had spoken, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died; words that disclose what had been in the minds of the devoted sisters at the crisis of their brothers sickness. Was there some slight thought of reproach at the delay of the Lord in coming? was it rather the expression of the perplexity in the heart that knew His love but understood not His ways? At the feet of Jesus Mary weeps. It was at the feet of Jesus she had sat to hear His word: now she falls at His feet to tell out the deep sorrow of her heart; and later she anoints His feet and wipes them with the hair of her head (John 12:3). This is indeed the place to bring our grief and sorrows, for the Son of God knows the pangs, the woes, the deepest feelings of the human heart. Knowing as none other could, and feeling as none else could feel, the dread results of death in this world, the Son of God is deeply moved in spirit and troubled. How wonderful this is! He has power over death, can stay its action, can recover from its grasp; and yet He is found groaning, troubled, weeping, as beholding its effects in those He loved. His love and His sympathy are as great as His power! and if He allows death to enter the homes of His loved ones, it is that they might realise His comfort and consolation in their sorrows and troubles. But the great end in view, what was ever before Him, and what should ever be before us is, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God."

If Martha is divinely taught, and Mary divinely comforted, Lazarus is the subject of the manifestation of divine power. It is in him who had come under death's power that the power of God in resurrection is shown forth for the display of the divine glory, and the glory of the Son of God. But poor Martha has not the faith for what is about to take place, and would forbid the removal of the stone that sealed the corruption of the dead. Her eyes were on the corruption of death, not on HIM Who is the resurrection and the life. There was no need to take the stone away, but the Lord commands the removal of the outward seal of death: was it to awaken the thought in the hearts of His own that the resurrection of Lazarus was impending? Was it to give the

opportunity for faith before the actual exercise of the divine power and the outshining of His glory? And it was when the stone was removed that He turned to His Father. His action was to manifest His glory, and it was to be an act of dependence. Every step of the perfect path, and its every action, were in dependence upon the Father Whose glory He ever sought. This was an occasion for thanksgiving to the Father. What had the Father heard? Was it the groanings of verses 33 and 38? Groanings that expressed the deep feelings of His spirit in the presence of the ravages of death; groanings that told out the sympathy of His heart for those who were immediately affected by death: groanings that called to the Father for the intervention of His power in the scene of suffering? Yes, the Father had heard Him, and He knew it well; but He turned to the Father that those around might know and believe His relationship to the Father.

Crying with a loud voice, the voice of authority and victory, "Lazarus come forth," the dead comes forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes; and at the word of Jesus he is brought into liberty. This is how the glory of God is manifested, in power over death, in the resurrection of the dead, in the communication of life. And it is thus that Jesus is declared the Son of God with power; in resurrection His glory shines out; here in the raising of Lazarus, later in His own resurrection, and in that great day for which we wait, when He shall call the sleeping saints from the tomb and change the living, and rapture all to be forever with Himself. How blessedly do we see in this wonderful scene at Bethany the truth of the words spoken by Jesus, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it." Death may appear for the moment to be triumphant, but faith sees Him Who has power over it, the Resurrection and the Life, and seeing Him the believer sees death robbed of its power and its sting. Death is the servant of the believer to take him into Christ's presence, into the fuller enjoyment of the life that is already ours in the Son of God, and there to await the blissful moment when the body will receive the quickening touch that will bring the saints into eternal glory with Jesus.

Wm. C. Reid.

S. Trees of Scripture

Trees of Scripture

No. 1 When writing of the wisdom and understanding of Solomon, of his proverbs and songs, the writer of 1 Kings adds, "And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall" (1 Kings 4:32-33). The Lord Jesus also spake of trees, of the good and corrupt trees, the green and the dry trees, the mustard seed that became a tree, the vine, "the fig tree, and all the trees" (Luke 21:29). There is much to be learned from the consideration of that which has been written of trees in Scripture, some of which we shall particularly notice. The Trees of Eden

After God had created Adam He put him in the garden of Eden, commanding him, saying, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:15-17). God, in His goodness, allowed Adam to eat of every tree in that wonderful garden that He had planted, where there was everything to delight and gratify his heart; to maintain His claim as Creator, God only reserved one tree for Himself. Moreover, it was best for man to remain in the condition of innocency in which God had created him, without the knowledge of good and evil, for in the bliss of innocency he could rejoice in all the work of God's hand without the exercises of soul that the knowledge of good and evil would bring.

Alas! it was not long before Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden tree, and brought upon themselves the dire consequences of their guilt. There was the sin of disobedience that made man guilty before God; there was the distance that separated the guilty sinner from God: there entered into the nature of man the evil principle that has been transmitted to every child of Adam, with the knowledge of good and evil there was neither power to resist the evil nor to do the good; there were entirely wrong thoughts of God implanted in the mind of man and with it the hatred of God that was soon evinced by Cain; there was exclusion from the garden of delights; there was the curse on the ground and with it a life of toil and sweat; and the sentence on Eve of sorrow in her conception. Not only was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden, there was also the tree of life, and this tree had not been forbidden. When Adam sinned the tree of life was forbidden, and God sent the cherubim with the flaming sword to guard the way of the tree of life. This was a merciful intervention of God. How awful it would have been if man in sin had been allowed to avert the sentence that God had pronounced, and that a sinful race, with all the accumulated knowledge and results of sin, had polluted God's fair earth for ever. What a defeat it would have been for God! What a triumph for Satan! What awful misery and degradation for the human race! As things appeared, the enemy no doubt thought he had gained a great victory over God in bringing such ruin upon the creature of His hands, but the wisdom of God allowed the enemy to gain this temporary advantage so that His final triumph over him might bring to men the most wonderful blessings, blessings infinitely beyond anything that could be connected with the first creation. Even while pronouncing His various judgments, God announced the coming of the

mighty Deliverer, who would undo the works of the devil, and lay the basis for the accomplishment of God's hidden counsels for His own glory and the eternal blessing of men. The great Deliverer was to be the seed of the woman, who would crush the serpent's head, but who in doing so would have His own heel bruised. What a blessed announcement of the coming of God's own Son, and of His great work on the cross!

Coming to the New Testament we learn of the fulfilment of the announcement made by God in Eden, and that in connection with another tree, for in 1 Peter 2:24 it is written, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." The tree whereon the Son of God died has become for us a tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for there has been manifested the wonderful goodness of God, but also the dreadful evil of the creature of God. It was there too that the great conflict of good and evil came to its head, and where the goodness of God triumphed over the evil of man and Satan.

Israel's wickedness and guilt were brought home to its rulers when Peter and the other apostles, arraigned before the high priest and the council, said to them. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree" (Acts 5:30). Stephen also brought before the high priest and the council of Israel the enormity of their guilt when he spoke to them concerning "the Just One; of whom ye have now become the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52).

Evil rose to its heights in the treatment meted out to the Son of God, and while Israel bore a special part in the guilt because of its special place of favour before God, the Gentiles also had their part. The leaders of Israel, Herod and Pilate all had their part in the reviling of the Son of God, and in the grave sentence of death passed upon the innocent and righteous One. What can be said of all the dishonour of the cross, and of the revilings and tauntings when the Holy One was treated worse than the malefactors with whom His murderers had associated Him in their contempt and evil?

If the dreadful evil of man reached its height in the cross of Christ, so that we see it as a tree of evil, there was also seen in all its richness and glory the wonderful goodness of God, so that the tree on which Christ died is also for us a tree of good. Truly good and evil are found together on the cross on which Jesus died.

God was not taken by surprise at the temerity, rebellion and unrestrained evil that rejected, ill-treated and crucified His only Son. In Eden He had spoken of the bruising of the heel of the Seed of the woman, and His prophets had clearly foretold what would take place. Through the cross, God took the opportunity to manifest His infinite goodness, and to lay the basis for the accomplishment of all His eternal purposes of love. Because of this, Peter was able to say to the Jews on the day of Pentecost. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). The Jews were not relieved of their guilt, but God took the occasion of the expression of their dreadful evil to manifest the fulness of His goodness. For the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the tree on which He died has also become a tree of life, even as the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). Apart from the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross we never could have eternal life, even as the Lord said in John 6:53-54, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in

you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." The dying thief who turned to the Lord when He hung upon the cross found Christ's cross to be for him the tree of life, for after he had said to the Lord, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," Jesus replied, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42-43). Having by his life of sin forfeited his life on earth, the repentant thief by faith in Jesus obtained eternal life, and that with Him in the paradise of God. That very day the erstwhile thief left the world, where man's paradise was lost, and where death reigned, to enter a heavenly paradise that God had prepared for those who trusted in His Son.

Jesus, the eternal Word, in whom life subsists, was once here incarnate, the tree of life in a barren wilderness, and in Him life was available for men, but men refused Him. In richest grace, God has made the cross of Christ, because Christ was there, the tree of life for all who trust in Him. Now Christ is in heaven, the tree of life is in its own heavenly place, and the Spirit of God says to the overcomer, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7). Very soon the Lord Jesus will come for His own to take them to be for ever with Him in the paradise of God, where the river of life is, and where the tree of life is, with its precious fruits, and with its leaves that never fade for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:2). At the close of the prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet says, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail . . . yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:17-18). Three trees are spoken of, the fig tree that was used for food, the vine which yielded grapes for wine to rejoice the hearts of men, and the olive tree which produced the oil for the anointing of the head. These three trees are prominent in Scripture, and are sometimes used symbolically to illustrate the relationships into which Israel had been brought with Jehovah their God. Habakkuk was no doubt saying that even if all human resources failed, he would still find His resource and joy in the Lord Himself. Looked at symbolically, can we not also see the attitude of the godly remnant of Israel at all times of the nation's failure? Whatever the state of the nation, they would still confide in the Lord, rejoicing in Him. The Vine In Isaiah 5:1-30 it is written regarding Jehovah and Israel, "My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes" (Isaiah 5:1-2). The key to the interpretation of the song is found in Isaiah 5:7, "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant."

Although the men of Judah are specially viewed in Isaiah as God's pleasant plant, His choicest vine, and that because the prophet was prophesying to Judah, it seems clear from Psalms 80:8 that the whole nation is also viewed as God's vine, where Asaph writes, "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it."

God shows the reason for His judgment on Judah in Isaiah 5:1-30, telling what He was about to do. Judah, like the ten tribes, had brought forth wild grapes, after having had the special care and attention of God; and He would remove His protection and allow the nations to invade the land, to take away the spoils and to leave His inheritance desolate. After bringing Israel from Egypt, God had removed the stones from the land, even the heathen which had corrupted themselves and the land, and had given them His protection. Jerusalem is likened to a tower, and the temple to a winepress, but in spite of all that God had done for His people they did not bring the fruits for His

pleasure, but instead they dishonoured His holy Name and brought grief to His heart. The wild grapes were the product of their corrupt nature, the oppression and unrighteousness that raised a cry to God, instead of the praise, thanksgiving and worship for which the Lord looked. Moreover, the history of Judah, like the history of the ten tribes, was one of idolatry. At the end of his days Solomon allowed idolatry in the land, and although some of the kings of Judah took away the idolatrous altars, the hearts of the people never seem to have been right with God, for as soon as restraint was weakened they returned to worship strange gods. Is it any wonder that God threatened to leave the land to "briers and thorns," and to "command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it" (Isaiah 5:6)?

What God said He would do to the land of Israel is seen to have been done in Psalms 80:1-19. There the call is to Jehovah to come and save His people, a call that will be answered in God's good time, and that by the Man of God's right hand, the Son of Man whom He has made strong for Himself (Psalms 80:17). God's judgment is owned upon His people, and Asaph asks, "Why hast Thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?" It was because Israel had turned her back on God, and had become rebellious, idolatrous, unrighteous and corrupt. When we come to John 15:1-27 we hear the Son of God say, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." What God desired from Israel, and which Israel could not produce, was found in perfection in Jesus upon earth. Every moment of the life of the Son of God yielded pleasure for His Father, and this the Father declared both at the baptism of Jesus and from the holy mount. The constant obedience of the Son in subjection to the Father's will, the lovely traits of the perfect Manhood of Jesus, gave unbroken delight to the Father as the Son carried out His will. If God's purpose to secure fruit for His pleasure in man seemed to fail through the wickedness of His earthly people, it was fully vindicated in the Son upon earth, in whom the history of Israel was taken up afresh, so that God was glorified in the Son in that in which Israel had dishonoured Him. To His disciples the Lord said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). It gave great joy to the Lord to have disciples in whom His own life was found and manifested. In themselves the disciples were but poor failing mortals, but as having His life, and in dependence upon Him, they were able to manifest something of the beautiful features that were found in the Son of God. The word of the Son of God had cleansed the disciples, and under the Father's care in dependence upon the Son, they brought forth fruit, more fruit and much fruit.

Although the Son of God is now in heaven, we, like the disciples on earth, are under the Father's care and discipline, and as abiding in the Son, and the Son in us, we can bring forth the fruit that shows that we are Christ's disciples, and here for the pleasure and glory of the Father. If the true vine is no longer in this world, the fruit that was so blessedly found in Him for the Father's joy is found as His own manifest the life that He has given them in its precious, divine and heavenly fruit.

God was no more taken aback by the failure of Israel to produce fruit for His pleasure than He was by the fall of Adam in Eden. In the Song of Moses, before Israel even entered the land of Canaan, God had said of Israel, "For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps" (Deuteronomy 32:32-33). All this was before Jehovah before He brought His people into the goodly land, and although the state of Israel demanded His righteous judgment, God would ultimately bring them into blessing, and the Gentiles with them, even as He said,

"Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people" (Deuteronomy 32:43).

Even if God foreknew the departure of Israel, and the evil that would mark the nation, which would necessitate its removal from the land it would corrupt, it nevertheless brought sorrow to His heart. Recalling the wickedness of His people, the Lord said, "Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" (Jeremiah 2:21). God's care of Israel, and the manifestation of His great goodness to His people, only proved that man under the very best conditions was utterly incorrigible and incapable of bringing forth fruit to please God. The word of the Lord to Ezekiel in relation to Israel was, "What is the vine tree more than any tree . . . shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel" (Ezekiel 15:2-4). God showed the prophet that even as the vine was unfit for anything but burning, so would He treat Israel, for "As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Ezekiel 15:6). Without fruit, a vine can only be used for burning, and if unfit for anything else before burning, what use could it possibly be after it was burned? How it must have grieved Jehovah to speak in this way of Israel. For God, Israel is compared to an empty vine, one that has been emptied of its fruit (Hosea 10:1). All the bounty of God bestowed on the nation had been used for their own pleasure in idolatry. Is it any wonder that God allowed the Chaldeans to come up against His people to execute His judgment on the ungodly, even as it is written, "He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree" (Joel 1:6-7)?

What a contrast between Israel, the useless, empty vine that brought forth bitter grapes, and the true Vine who ever delighted the heart of God with fruit that glorified Him before the people and constantly rejoiced His heart. How blessed too that He has now a people on earth in which the life of His own Son is found, and through whom the Son brings forth that same fruit for His delight.

Many divine thoughts have been conveyed to us through the trees of Scripture, whether trees that provided timber for constructional purposes, or that bore fruit, or that were used for ceremonial occasions. There was the acacia that was used in making the furniture and boards of the tabernacle in which God dwelt among His people, the cedar, the pine and the olive whose timbers were found in the temple of Solomon, and the "boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees . . . and willows of the brook" (Leviticus 23:40), of which the booths were made for the children of Israel in the feast of tabernacles. The Assyrian is viewed as a cedar (Ezekiel 31:3), Nebuchadnezzar as a tree that grew strong and high (Daniel 4:11), and the kingdom of heaven is likened by the Lord to a mustard seed that grew into a tree, the fowls of the air roosting in it depicting what the Christian profession would be. We have looked at trees of Eden, and the vine among the fruit trees; we shall now consider something of what Scripture presents of the fig tree and the olive tree. The Fig Tree In Joel 1:6-7 we read of the Chaldeans invading Judah and Jerusalem, wasting them as God's vine and barking them as God's fig tree. The vine was the symbol of God's people as the supplier of fruit for His pleasure, and with this in view God brought them out of Egypt and planted them in a land flowing with milk and honey. The temple, the priesthood and the sacrificial system were all related to God's means of bringing to Him the fruits with which He provided Israel for His delight. Their worship and praise, their lives of righteousness and holiness, would bring pleasure to the God who had blessed them so richly. Alas, instead of righteousness and holiness there was rebellion against Him and corruption, and their praise and worship were given to idols instead of to Jehovah. The fig tree suggests what Israel was politically

among the nations, set up in Canaan to be a testimony for God among the nations, and in this way to bring glory to God. When Israel was taken captive, Judah was left a little longer in the land to be a testimony for Him, but Judah, following in the idolatrous steps of Israel, was also removed from the land. Those left in the land with wicked king Zedekiah, instead of turning from their evil ways, continued in them, and God likened them, to "evil figs, which cannot be eaten" (Jeremiah 24:8). When the Lord Jesus was on earth He spoke a parable that likened the Jews to a fig tree that bore no fruit for God (Luke 13:6-9). For three years the Son of God had worked in the midst of Israel, with the object of bringing fruit to God, but His labours were in vain. When God called for the cutting down of the fig tree, the Lord pleaded for it to be spared for another year so that He might give it special attention. If at the end of this time there was still no fruit, the sentence of cutting it down was to be carried out. Was it not within the time of this special care that the Lord Jesus showed the wonders of God's grace to the nation? Galilee had rejected Him in spite of all His wonderful works, and coming to Jerusalem and Judea He opened the eyes of the blind beggar and raised Lazarus from death and corruption. How wonderful was the ministry recorded in John 7:1-53; John 8:1-59; John 9:1-41; John 10:1-42; John 11:1-57; John 12:1-50, and also that recorded in the Synoptic Gospels during the Lord's last days in the favoured city, but in spite of all that was done and spoken the nation would not receive the One that God had sent. Instead, they rejected the Son of God, and with wicked hands crucified and slew Him. The time had come to cut down the tree. God still lingered in grace, but when the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the glorified Christ was rejected, all was over with Israel as God's fig tree.

What was about to happen to the guilty nation was seen in the cursing of the fig tree, on which the Lord found no fruit as He was on His way to Jerusalem after having spent the night in Bethany (Matthew 21:19-21).

Like the fig tree with its show of leaves, Israel had much in the way of outward religiousness, but there was no fruit for God from the nation. The Lord knew that God would linger in longsuffering, sending His apostles after His resurrection with a message of mercy, but He also knew that although a remnant would accept the proffered blessing, the nation as such would, with its leaders, still reject the grace of God. The curse on the fig tree brought God's judgment on the nation as carried out by the Romans under Titus.

Yet this was not the end of God's dealings with Israel as His fig tree. It was the end of Israel under the law, under the old covenant which they had undertaken at Sinai, but God had better things for His people under the new covenant that had been spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah. Of this the Lord spoke in Matthew 24:32, "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh." Israel's summer will yet come, and under the blessing of the new covenant there will be fruit for God, when Israel will be the head of the nations, and blessings will flow from Jerusalem, the Lord being there, to all the nations of the earth.

We have seen that, although there was no fruit for God from the nation, the Lord pleaded with God for them to have His special care, but without result, so that they came under the divine curse and judgment, a judgment under which they still suffer. Soon the nation is to be taken up again by God under the new covenant, after they have passed through the judgments spoken of by the Lord in Matthew 24:1-51, and in other Scriptures, but the end will be for their blessing and the glory of the

Lord, with abundance of fruit from the fig tree in the millennial day. The Olive Tree The Holy Spirit teaches us in Romans 11:21 that Israel, on whom God has not spared His judgment, were the natural branches of His olive tree, in which were the promises and blessings of God. Abraham, who first received the blessing and promises of God, was no doubt the root of the tree, and the patriarchs who inherited the promises were the stock. The nation of Israel as descended from Abraham were natural branches, but were cut off because of their unbelief, as only by faith was it possible to enter into the divine blessings that were given to faithful Abraham. Not all who were naturally descended from Abraham had been cut off from the olive tree, Paul himself being a witness to this, for he was "an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Romans 11:1). Yet his place in the olive tree did not rest on natural generation, but rather on his faith in Christ. All of Israel who, like Paul, had accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, had their part in the olive tree, not as natural branches, but as having the faith of faithful Abraham.

Israel had rejected, as a nation, their Messiah, and those who took sides with the leaders of the nation in refusing Christ lost their place as branches in the olive tree. On the other hand, the Gentiles who accepted God's Christ were grafted into the olive tree, in which were the blessings of God. Naturally, the Gentiles had no claim on God's promises, they were branches of a wild olive, "being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).

God's severity has been manifested in His dealings with the natural branches who believed not in the One whom He had sent to them with richest blessing, and His goodness is seen in His bringing the Gentiles into blessing through faith in His Son. As Gentiles we have no claim on God naturally, for we were sinners far from Him, and we had no claim on the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for we are not of their seed. Gentiles who are blessed of God stand before Him in blessing on the ground of faith alone, the faith that lays hold on God's grace and through which they are found as God's righteousness in Christ.

Paul gives a warning to the Gentiles when he writes, "Thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee" (Romans 11:20-21). The present state of the Christian profession shows how necessary this warning was. The great mass of Christendom today is composed of those who have "a form of godliness," but deny its power (2 Timothy 3:5), and are not standing in faith before God. Such will assuredly be cut off from the good olive tree if they continue without a living link that faith gives with the Christ of God. The rejection of those who are not vitally united to Christ is clearly taught in Revelation 3:1-22, where the Lord says to Laodicea, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:16). Here is the total rejection of the Christian profession after the true Christians have been taken to heaven by Christ at the rapture. All who are left behind in Laodicea are as branches cut off from the olive tree in which they have taken their place by profession, but in which they have no right to be as not having living faith in the Son of God.

If the professing Gentiles who have no real faith in Christ will be cut off, there is also the prophecy concerning the grafting in again of the natural branches, for "if they abide not still in unbelief . . . God is able to graff them in again" (Romans 11:23). This will take place when the Lord comes back again, even as it had been written so long before, "There shall come out of Sion the

Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Romans 11:26).

All Israel is to be saved in the millennial day (Romans 11:26), but it is after the rebels are purged out (Ezekiel 20:34-38), and the followers of antichrist have been "cut off" in the land (Zechariah 13:8-9). God in His sovereign grace has been pleased to bring the Gentiles into blessing, according to His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord, but this has not set aside God's purpose for the blessing of His earthly people according to the promises to His servant Abraham, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (verse 29).

How brightly the sovereign mercy of God shines in His dealings with His people, whether those who are now blest with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, or those who shall have the blessings of the new covenant on earth in the coming day. Well might the Apostle break out in praise to God with the words, "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. . . . For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Romans 11:33-36).

Wm. C. Reid. The Tree of Life Ah, see that radiant heavenly throne!

See thence the living water flowing. The tree of life, but now alone, By the translucent wave is growing. The leaves to heal the scars of earth In balmy show'rs shall be descending; For us the fruit of highest worth, Ambrosial pleasure, never ending!

Lord Jesus! now we know Thy grace In bonds of life no power can sever;

What shall it be to see Thy face, And eat the fruit of life for ever?

We think of that perennial tree With hearts enraptured, never tiring;

Lord! every thought shall spring to Thee Thy glorious beauty still admiring!

E. L. Bevir.

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