

The Dawn

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Highlights of Dawn

*God's hand can be more clearly discerned
and understood in the otherwise perplexing,
topsy-turvy world of today, when we come
to realize that the Scriptures teach . . .*

The Gentile Times Have Ended

*"Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles,
until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."*

—Luke 21:24

THIS prophecy by Jesus concerning the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles was given to his disciples as part of his response to their question concerning the sign of his second presence, and the end of the age. (Matt. 24:3) If upon examination we find that this prophecy is now being fulfilled, then we have undeniable proof that our Lord has returned, and is invisibly present preparing for the establishment of his kingdom.

First of all, let us ask what Jesus meant by the expression, "times of the Gentiles"? We believe this is a reference to a situation which was pointed up in Jesus' day by the fact that Israel was a subject nation to Rome. At that time Israel had been a vassal nation for more than six hundred years, beginning with the overthrow of their last king, Zedekiah, in 606 B.C. Jesus' statement indicated that this situation was to continue for a certain period of time, and that Jerusalem, symbolizing the Jewish people and polity, would continue to be trodden down until that period of time had been completed.

But more than this is involved. Israel was not just another nation among nations on the earth. Israel was God's nation, his chosen people; and through the kings of Israel God ruled over the people of Israel. (I Chron. 29:23) During the period

when this was true, no Gentile nation had any divine right to exercise authority and rulership in the earth. Gentile nations were permitted to exist, but without divine favor.

But this arrangement came to an end with the overthrow of Israel's last king. The Prophet Ezekiel pointed up this fact: "Thou, profane and wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end. Thus saith the LORD God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him."—Ezek. 21:25-27

This is the divine decree, that the kingdom of Israel in which their kings ruled as God's representatives, had fallen and that God's governmental authority would not again be established in the earth until he come whose right it is, and that then he would sit upon the throne of the LORD. This one is without doubt the promised Messiah, and while he came at the first advent to redeem his future subjects from death, it is at his second advent and presence that he becomes ruler of earth.

How Long?

Is there any way of knowing just how long a period the times of the Gentiles really is? We believe that this information is furnished in Leviticus 26:18-26, where the LORD speaks of a final period of punishment that would come upon the rebellious people of Israel, describing it as a punishment of "seven times." The punishment mentioned is pronounced with such a degree of finality that we are impressed with the thought that this indeed must be the beginning of that special time of trial upon Israel, which, as the prophet declares, was to continue until he come who has the sovereign right to rule all nations.

How long a period, then, is described by the expression, "seven times"? The reference here is to the lunar year observed by the Israelites, the length of which was three hundred and sixty days. Using the Bible's own method of reckoning time prophecies

in which a day stands for a year, this would mean that the times of the Gentiles was to be a period of 2,520 years. Beginning with the overthrow of Israel's last king in 606 B.C., it would end in A.D. 1914.

Before we examine the evidence substantiating the fact that the times of the Gentiles did end in 1914, let us note from the Scriptures what this expression implies with respect to Gentile nations. To the Jews it meant domination and subjection, described by Jesus as a treading down; but what has it meant to the Gentiles? Did the beginning of the times of the Gentiles mark the beginning of the existence of Gentile nations? No! Powerful Gentile nations had existed for centuries prior to the beginning of the times of the Gentiles.

A good prophetic picture of the position of the Gentile nations during the times of the Gentiles is furnished in Daniel's interpretation of the dream to Babylon's king, Nebuchadnezzar. It is recorded in Daniel 2:31-45. In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a human-like image having a head of gold; breast and arms of silver; belly and thighs of brass; legs of iron; and feet and toes of iron and clay mixed. In the dream a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and smote the image on its feet, causing it to fall, and then grinding it to powder. The powder was blown away like the chaff from a summer threshing floor.

It was Nebuchadnezzar who overthrew Israel's last king, and made captives of the Israelites. In explaining the meaning of his dream to this Gentile king, Daniel said: "This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold."—Dan. 2:36-38

Daniel's interpretation of the king's dream, as it applied to Nebuchadnezzar, seems very clear. The head of gold represented him as the head of the Babylonian Empire, and the fact that the

God of heaven had given him dominion. Babylon existed before this, and Nebuchadnezzar was king before this. But now the God of heaven had given him the right to rule. This was the important lesson of the image picture.

Still speaking to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Daniel said, "After thee shall arise another kingdom." The second kingdom was represented by the breast and arms of silver. And the same interpretation must hold true of the second kingdom as Daniel gave concerning the first; namely, that the God of heaven had given dominion, or the right to rule.

Daniel continues his interpretation until he brings before us four mighty empires to which the God of heaven had given, or would give, dominion. History indicates these to be Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The Roman Empire was the one in control during the period of the Early Church, and concerning her authority the Apostle Paul wrote, "The powers that be are ordained [margin, ordered] of God." (Rom. 13:1) Evidently Paul understood Daniel's prophecy.

The authority given Nebuchadnezzar by God, and to the succeeding empires, did not make them God's representatives in the earth. It did not make them the kingdom of God, as was the case in a typical sense of the kingdom of Israel. However, during the period that the kingdom of Israel did function as God's typical kingdom, all other kingdoms were completely without divine authorization. But now that this theocracy had been suspended "until he come whose right it is," God gave this particular succession of Gentile powers the right to rule without his intervention except when their activities interfered with the outworking of his own plans and purposes.

Furthermore, the period during which this divine authorization was to last was also to be a time of punishment of God's people, Israel. Hence, during the legal tenure by the Gentile powers of their office, he would not interfere with the manner in which they dealt with the Israelites. The Israelites were to be subject to these Gentile powers. They were to be 'trodden down' by

the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled. This does not mean that throughout the entire period of Gentile times the Israelites were to be continuously and bitterly persecuted, but merely that they were to be a subject nation, with no divine right to expect favors from their captors.

It is reasonable to conclude that the information which Daniel gave to Nebuchadnezzar concerning the fact that God had given him dominion would be passed on to his successors; that the idea would naturally come on down from one king to another, and from one dynasty to another, changing in form as the various rulers placed their own interpretation upon its meaning. It is not surprising, therefore, that when we look into the pages of history covering the Middle Ages, and even down to the period immediately preceding the First World War, the four principal ruling families of Europe—the legal inheritors of authority which once resided in the Roman Empire, and which in turn had come all the way down from Babylon—should still be claiming to rule by divine right.

In principle, the claim of divine right on the part of these kings was true. Its meaning had become distorted in that the claim was made that these divisions of the Roman Empire constituted Christ's kingdom, and that God held himself responsible for what they did. This, of course, was wrong. They had been given divine authorization, but no assurance of divine guidance or divine approval.

One of the distortions of the 'divine right' doctrine was brought about through the influence of the Church of Rome, and later by some of her Protestant daughters; namely, that the union of church and state constituted the kingdom of Christ. The Church of Rome, through her popes, crowned and uncrowned kings at her will, and those who resisted her authority to do this were treated as enemies of God. Likewise, any who doubted that the kings she crowned were actually the representatives of heaven were also treated as rebels against divine authority.

It was this particular distortion of the divine right doc-

trine with which the kingdoms of Europe were imbued up to and during the years immediately preceding the First World War. Not all of them had continued to recognize the authority of the Church of Rome, but practically all of them believed that in some mysterious way the authority of heaven resided in their particular church-state government. So true was this that the soldiers of nearly all the countries who fought in the First World War were given to believe that if they died in battle, 'fighting for the LORD', they would go straight to heaven.

This was the situation in Europe and elsewhere just prior to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the prophetic time for the ending of the times of the Gentiles. But the war quickly and effectively changed this situation. Men of the world, quite apart from any knowledge of the Bible prophecy concerning the times of the Gentiles, recognize the tremendous change which that war brought about. In 1910 the crowned heads of Europe assembled for the funeral services of King Edward VII. It was a gala display of royal authority and might. The **London Sunday Express**, in an editorial, refers to this, and then adds:

"Who in 1910 would have believed any of the things that have come to pass among the ruling houses of Europe in a few short years? Consider them as they were—the Romanoffs, the Bourbons, the Hapsburgs, the Hohenzollerns. Before the war they seemed entrenched in power and wealth forever. Think of how for centuries they had owned Europe and ruled over it. How they had told the world that God had appointed them to rule it. How they had called each other, 'Sir, my brother', and formed themselves into a little elect inter-marrying band. Some had a high idea of their calling. Others abused their powers and wealth in loose living and luxury. But they all believed that they were permanent, privileged, irreplaceable.

"Yet a series of little puffs of wind that blew soon after they assembled in strength for almost the last time at Edward VII's funeral in 1910 sent them flying. Not one of them, it is safe to say, had the least inkling of the disasters and adventures that

were to befall them and their relatives."

Speaking of the ex-Kaiser of Germany, the same writer says: "Would he have believed, he who had always made a point of never meeting a labor leader, that his grandson, nominal heir to the throne, would be working in a motor car factory, and that many others of his relatives would be glad to take commercial jobs? No, there would have been no one living in 1910 who would have been bold enough to prophesy the extraordinary series of strokes that have . . . felled these high titled ones in a few short years. They are one of history's surprise packets."

Yes, the hereditary ruling houses of Europe, functioning as church-state rulers, were set aside through the events which began at the end of the times of the Gentiles in 1914. True, there are yet a few nominal kings and queens, but these exercise no real power in the affairs of Europe or of the world. And particularly dead is the ideology of the divine right of kings, which is the basic lesson of Nebuchadnezzar's image picture.

In describing prophetically the downfall of this image at the end of the times of the Gentiles, Daniel said, "Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces **together.**" (Dan. 2:35) Babylon fell first, then Medo-Persia, then Greece, and finally Rome—as world powers, that is. But Daniel said that that which was represented by the various metals in the image would fall together, at the same time. This explanation must apply to that which was common to all the governments represented by the image, which was that the God of heaven had given them dominion. It was this that fell at the close of the Gentile times, as history now clearly establishes. Gentile nations existed before the times of the Gentiles began, and Gentile nations still exist, but the divine right of kings as an ideology of government no longer functions in the earth. The times of the Gentiles have ended.

Israel's Position

As we have seen, the times of the Gentiles was also a

period during which the Israelites would have no national standing in the earth. Now, and also as a result of events beginning in 1914, Israel is again a nation. As a result of the First World War, Turkish control of the Holy Land was broken, and the Jews were permitted to return there, with certain privileges and benefits long denied them.

In doing this, the Israelites had many difficulties to overcome. For a time, their migration to Palestine was held up. But, on the whole, steady progress has been made; and in 1948 the new state of Israel was formed. This new state has since become a member of the United Nations, and while plagued by the same distress that is upon all nations, it is not subject to any of them in the sense of having to pay tribute, as was the case at the time of Jesus.

So, from this standpoint also, we have definite evidence that the times of the Gentiles have ended. Jesus did not say that when the times of the Gentiles had ended we would immediately see the beginning of life-giving blessings flow to Israel and the world. It was just that Jerusalem, symbol of the Israelites and their polity, would no longer be trodden down.

Time prophecies of the Bible frequently mark the beginning of great changes to which they refer, rather than their completion. This is true of the prophecies pertaining to Israel's 'double' period of punishment. (Zech. 9:12) The turning point of this double was at the time the nation rejected Jesus as their king. Jesus then declared to the nation, "Your house is left unto you desolate." (Matt. 23:38) Actually, however, it was practically forty years subsequent to this that Jerusalem was destroyed and the nation dispersed among the Gentiles. All that occurred when Jesus said, "Your house is left unto you desolate," was the withdrawal from Israel of their part as a nation in the royal promises pertaining to the kingdom of Christ, and from then on, the foretold dispersion from their land was to take place.

The ending of the times of the Gentiles was very similar to this. The withdrawal from the Gentiles of the lease of domin-

ion occurred in 1914, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that a period of time will be required to destroy those who still lay claim to its rights, similar to that which it took for the down-fall of Israel following the injunction, "Your house is left unto you desolate." Not only will the last fragments of the nations pictured in Nebuchadnezzar's image, as well as their associates, be destroyed, but Israel will be restored, and the new kingdom will be operating from Jerusalem.

Some may argue that the Jews have been more bitterly persecuted since that time than ever before, hence the end of the times of the Gentiles could not have been reached. But this view fails to take into consideration another group of prophecies which indicate that the end of their national bondage to Gentile nations, and the time for their return to Palestine, would be marked by great distress. The prophecies indicate that this particular trouble would come to "cause" them to return to their own land; and would be peculiar to the time when the LORD would "bring again" their captivity. (Jer. 30:3,11) Jeremiah also tells us that the LORD would send "fishers" and "hunters" among his people to cause them to return to the Promised Land. (Jer. 16:14-18) From these prophecies—and there are other similar ones—it is clear that the turning point of time from national captivity to national freedom from the Gentile yoke, would not at once make an end of all tribulation for the Jews.

Who, then, that believes in the prophecies of the Bible can doubt the meaning of the history-making events that have kept the Jews almost constantly on the front pages of the world's newspapers ever since 1914!

Meanwhile, since 1914, the Gentile nations have continued to disintegrate. Since Nebuchadnezzar's image depicting Gentile rulership represented particularly that the God of heaven gave him a kingdom, it is most significant to realize that the divine right of kings viewpoint has almost completely disappeared as an active governmental philosophy among the nations. As we had seen, the Gentile governments of the divided Roman Empire

which held to this ideology have themselves nearly all been destroyed, and in their places—put there either by the force of arms, or by the vote of the people—are various forms of communistic and socialistic governments. Church-state rulership has gone; the divine right of hereditary ruling houses is past, and now there is every evidence that the new forms of government ruling the world are preparing for another clash of arms which has put the entire world in great peril.

Thus seen, whether we look at the experiences of the Jews since 1914, or whether we view the undeniable changes occurring in Gentile rulership since 1914, we cannot question the proof that the times of the Gentiles have ended. And when we put the two lines of evidence together there is no escaping the certainty of their meaning.

True, all governments have not yet been completely destroyed; nor are the Jews enjoying the peace and liberty which will yet be theirs. But neither of these conditions will be wholly realized until the kingdom of Christ is in full operation. The prophecies clearly show, in fact, that even after the kingdom of Christ is operating, and manifesting its authority in and from Jerusalem, there will be nations still existing, some of which may not for a time bow the knee to divine authority. One of the prophecies depicting this is Zechariah 14:16-19. Here it is indicated that the punishment of such recalcitrant nations will be that upon them there will be no rain. Micah 4:1-4—another prophecy of the kingdom established—speaks of "strong nations" which will need to be rebuked by the mountain-kingdom that is then established in the top of the mountains.

The kingdom of Christ is to reign over the earth for the purpose of destroying enemies—enemies of God, of righteousness, and of man. One of these enemies is humanly constituted authority, based upon selfishness and hate. The last of the enemies to be destroyed is death. If we think of the operation of the kingdom of Christ as marking a time when there is no opposition, either nationally or individually, to divine authority and

righteousness, we will fail not only to grasp the full significance of many of the prophecies pertaining to that kingdom, but also the significance of what is occurring in the earth today.

Although this is not an occasion to discuss in detail the prophecies of Revelation, it is fitting, we think, to call attention to some revealing points in chapters seventeen and eighteen of the Apocalypse. All agree that these chapters pertain to the closing scenes of man-made rulership over the earth, both civil and ecclesiastical. Concerning the ten horns of the scarlet-colored beast described in the seventeenth chapter, it is explained that they "are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet." (Rev. 17:12) When we think of the definite manner in which God gave a kingdom to Nebuchadnezzar, which authority was to pass on down from one dynasty to another, even to the end of the Gentile times, it seems particularly significant that here the LORD should be telling us of kings or kingdoms which had been given no kingdom.

While these kings have been given no kingdom in the sense that dominion was given to Nebuchadnezzar and his successors, they are given a commission, for we read that "God hath put it in their hearts to fulfill his will," and his will for them is that they shall be his instruments in destroying the harlot woman. In Revelation 18:9, the kings of the earth which committed fornication with the harlot woman are shown as standing afar off—in exile—mourning over the downfall of the system with which they were once associated. These are the remnants of the kings which once functioned under the Gentile times' authorization, but now they are helpless—the few that remain—to hinder the complete destruction of that system of which they were a part. The kings or governments which had been given no kingdom, hold the upper hand until the will of the LORD concerning the woman is fully carried out. And finally even these, together with the beast, of which they are a part, will go into perdition.

These unique events concerning Israel's rise, and the Gentiles' fall, following the ending of the Gentile times, Jesus gave

as signs to his people evidencing the nearness of his approaching kingdom. These signs, ever-increasing since 1914, are indeed all about us today, and bring renewed realization that his glorious kingdom is soon to come! □

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International Bible Study Lessons

LESSON FOR FEBRUARY 1

Justified by Grace through Faith

KEY VERSE: *"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

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: Galatians 2:15-21

WHAT a glorious reward of faith! From God's standpoint it is as though, through accepting Jesus as our Redeemer, we had been restored to perfection of life such as the world will enjoy at the close of the "times of restitution." Thus, through faith, we have a reckoned perfect life to offer in sacrifice, even as Jesus did.

Jesus was "made flesh," "crowned with glory and honor" of perfect human nature in order that he might give himself in death a "ransom for all." (I Tim. 2:3-6) And now his followers are invited to suffer and die with him. Their bodies also are presented in sacrifice.—Rom. 12:1

It is possible for these to offer an acceptable sacrifice to God only because they are made free from Adamic condemnation through the merit of the blood of Christ. Paul speaks of their bodies being offered a "living sacrifice." This can be only because, through the merit of Christ's blood, they are no longer under death condemnation, but through faith have been made alive in Christ.

Paul wrote, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1) To have peace with God implies separation from the condemned and dying family of Adam. It implies that peace with God is the heritage of those who belong to the family of God. And now, through faith in Christ, which is demonstrated by works of full consecration, we may enjoy this rich reward of faith.

"By whom also," Paul continues, "we have access by faith into this [further] grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." (vs. 2) Yes, faith has opened the door into this glorious hope of the divine nature, and of sharing the glory of God. "And not only so," Paul adds, "but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience hope. And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us."—vss. 3-5

The Apostle Paul also wrote: "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Living by faith, means that faith in God and in his promises is a way of life. It is the only way that a Christian can live day by day rejoicingly, at peace with God, and enjoying the peace of God.

Living by faith, the abundant mercy and love of God are our daily portion. Living by faith is to live free from condemnation. Living by faith is to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Living by faith we triumph in tribulation. Living by faith we are led by the Spirit of God and enjoy the blessings belonging to the sons of God.

Living by faith we can go boldly to the throne of grace to receive strength for our every time of need. By faith we know that all things work together for our good because we love God and are the called according to his purpose. By faith we know that nothing can separate us from the love of God, or the love of Christ, that since he is for us, nothing can be successfully against us.—Rom. 8:31,35-39

By faith we dwell in the "secret place of the Most High," and by faith we are sheltered under the "wings" of the Almighty. Truly the just do live by faith. Such a glorious life as this was made possible by him who loved us and gave himself for us. How rich are the rewards of sonship which have come to us through the faith of the Son of God.

What an abundance of life faith has brought. □

Set Free to Love

KEY VERSE: *"If we love one another God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."*—I John 4:12

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *James 3:8-18; John 4: 7,12*

THERE is no escaping the thought that Christian love is closely associated with sacrifice, being that motivating principle governing the heart of every follower of the Master. It is that which impels to faithfulness in the service of the LORD and of the brethren, even though that service leads to death—as indeed it must before the Christian's walk in the narrow way is finished.

This is fully in harmony with the Master's own exposition on the subject of brotherly love. He said to his disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you." (John 13:34) We all know the manner in which Jesus loved us. It was a self-sacrificing love, a love that prompted him to give up life itself in order that we might live. And his "new commandment" to us is that we love one another as he loved us, that our "brotherly love" manifest itself toward our brethren. It is also an impelling force which manifests itself in unselfish devotion to a great cause, that common cause of all the fellow-members of the body of Christ, the cause of sacrifice in the interests of one another, that all may receive an abundant entrance into the kingdom.

And as Jesus delves deeper into the subject of love, he uncovers another heart-searching fact concerning it, in the question, "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" (Matt. 5:46) We are loved—or should be—by our own brethren in Christ; so at first glance it would appear—although it is not actually so—that Jesus is here discounting somewhat the importance of his own new commandment to love our brethren, indicating that there is

no sacrifice involved in loving those who love us.

And there is a danger that we may adopt this viewpoint, and in our hearts and minds try to separate love from sacrifice. If we do this, the next easy viewpoint to adopt is that sacrifice is not essential in the Christian life, that only love is required. Thus the reasoning of the fleshly mind supersedes that of the new mind, and those thus overtaken begin to go into spiritual decline.

But does the commandment to love one another which Jesus gave us imply that we love only those who love us? Surely not! Note, for example, his added explanation, "as I have loved you." Our love for one another is to be the same kind of love and is to operate under similar conditions as Jesus' love for us. When we take this into consideration the whole viewpoint of that new commandment is broadened considerably, for divine love through Christ was exercised on our behalf "while we were yet sinners," that is, long before we were in a position to love him.—Rom. 5:8

The divine plan for the followers of Jesus whereby they would have the privilege of exercising love for one another upon the same basis as Jesus loved them is outlined by the Master himself in his command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel for the purpose of making disciples. These disciples which are to be made through the ministry of the truth are our brethren, for whom we have the privilege of sacrificing while they are still sinners, even as Jesus thus laid down his life for us.

The quality of love which reached out for our salvation while we were yet sinners is that superlative expression of unselfishness which we will need in order to lay down our lives for the brethren, to love them as Jesus loved us—that is, if we are to love all the brethren and not merely those who take a special interest in us or those whose company and association we specially enjoy. It is this quality of love that covers a multitude of sins. All this, and more, is implied in the words of our text, "If we love one another." □

Being Christian in Relationships

KEY VERSE: *"Even as Christ forgave you, even so do ye."*—Colossians 3:13

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *Colossians 3:5-21*

THERE is perhaps no other quality of character more Godlike than that of forgiveness. The entire plan of salvation for mankind has been designed around his great desire to forgive men their trespasses. The statement made when God's plan will have accomplished his purpose is this: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."—Jer. 31:34

Jesus came into the world as the living expression of God's desire to forgive. Redemption required a sacrifice which God himself provided. Jesus, the sacrifice, offered himself willingly in complete heart harmony with his Father. Can such offers of forgiveness ever be fully understood or appreciated? Jesus on one occasion instructed Peter that he should be willing to forgive seventy times seven. This must be understood as a reflection of Jesus' own attitude toward erring ones, and also that of his Heavenly Father.

In a related parable, Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants." (Matt. 18: 23-35) We need not suppose that every detail of the parable that follows was intended by Jesus to represent some truth with respect to the kingdom class. The principal lesson is that the Lord is desirous that every member of the little flock to whom it is his good pleasure to give the kingdom will possess the same disposition of mercy as that which he himself exercises. Mercy is one of the aspects of true holiness, and we are admonished to be holy as God is holy.

While the parable pertains particularly to the kingdom

class now being developed, we may take a broader view of the LORD'S mercy than that which is seen in his dealing with his servants of the present age. Divine justice called for the condemnation of the human race to death because of sin, but the love of God provided a way of escape from this condemnation. Thus we read 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

It was this love of God expressed through Christ, which constrained us to present ourselves in consecration to do his will. (II Cor. 5:14,15) Thus we become his 'servants', as designated in the parable, and our appreciation of divine mercy and love should, from the beginning of our service, influence us also to be merciful.

In reckoning with his servants, one is brought before the king who owes him a huge debt. The situation for this servant is hopeless unless the king exercises mercy toward him. The servant does not ask a cancellation of the debt, but merely for the exercise of patience by the king, promising that in time he would make full payment. The king was "moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt."

The servant to whom so much had been forgiven refused to show mercy toward a fellow-servant who owed him but a small debt. His fellow-servants, and the king also, were displeased with this ungrateful attitude, and the unforgiving servant was properly punished. This basic lesson of the parable is clearly set forth in the Master's teachings. He taught his disciples to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Then he emphasized the importance of this, saying, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. 6:12,14,15) There is no limit to the number of times we should forgive those who trespass against us; for there is no limit to the times we need the Heavenly Father's and our Lord Jesus' forgiveness. □

Encouragement for Troubled Times

KEY VERSE: *"I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and of death."-Revelation 1:18*

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *REVELATION 1:4,5,8-18*

AMONG the many common objects used in the Bible as illustrations of important features of truth is the "key." A key gives access to that which is locked, and without the key the contents are unavailable. After the Master had demonstrated his faithfulness even unto death, as a reward for his obedience he was able to say, "All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28:18) Included in this authority was the privilege of carrying out all the wonderful features of the great divine plan for human salvation. And as a part of this authority Jesus was appointed many keys, including the ones of our text, those of "death and of hades."

How thankful we are to know that Jesus has these keys—the right and power, as soon as Satan is bound and his kingdom overthrown and Christ's kingdom set up—to gradually raise up to perfect life, the billions of mankind now under the sentence of death, most of whom have gone down into the grave.

This condition is described by the Prophet Isaiah as a prison house (Isa. 61:1) and Jesus, quoting from this prophecy, announced that he was the one sent to "proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."—Luke 4:18

A thought somewhat akin to this is expressed by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:8. Quoting from the marginal translation this text reads concerning Christ: "When he ascended up on high he led a multitude of captives." This is a quotation from Psalm 68:18, which, according to Rotherham, states that Jesus

led "in procession a body of captives." While the reference in these texts is particularly to Jesus' exaltation, this is vitally associated with his resurrection, for it was when he was raised from the sleep of death that he was highly exalted to the divine nature, far above every name that is named.—Eph. 1:18-23

The first of these captives in death whom Jesus leads forth are his own body members. Jesus, together with these, is referred to by Paul in the same text, part of which has already been quoted, as "Christ the firstfruits." That Jesus' followers are included in the firstfruits is confirmed by James, who wrote, "Of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." (James 1:18) Concerning those who faithfully follow the Lamb, we read, "These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." (Rev. 14:4) The firstfruits class is very small in number compared with the multitudes which will be led forth from their captivity in death.—Rev. 7:4; 14:1,3,4

The Old Testament refers to the dead as being "prisoners," or captives, in death, and their awakening as a release from captivity. (Isa. 49:9) After mentioning the death state of the young, the old, the rich, the poor, the rulers, and the wicked in death, Job adds, "There the prisoners rest together."—Job 3:18

In Ezekiel 16:53 the resurrection is likened to the release of captives, or prisoners: "When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives [Israelites] in the midst of them."

In Jeremiah 48:47 the LORD says, "I will bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days." Of the Ammonites we read, "I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the LORD." (Jer. 49:6) And the Elamites will also be released from their captivity. We read, "It shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the LORD." (Jer. 49:39) These are but some of the vast multitudes who are to be led forth from their captivity in death. □

Christian Life and Doctrine

TIMES AND SIGNS—PART 8

The Rise and Fall of the Antichrist—Part II

*“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation,
spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place,
(whoso readeth, let him understand).”*

Matthew 24:15

THE expression, ‘abomination of desolation’, is another prophetic description of that counterfeit of Christ’s kingdom to which the name Antichrist also applies. Certainly the great Antichrist system foretold in the prophecies is an abomination—an abomination which indeed proved to be a desolation of God’s truths, and also a desolating, destroying power among the LORD’S people themselves.

In our text Jesus speaks of this abomination as having been foretold by the Prophet Daniel. Turning to the Book of Daniel we find it referred to twice. The first reference is found in chapter eleven, verse thirty-one; and the second in chapter twelve, verse eleven. Jesus’ reference to this desolating abomination is in the prophecy which he gave in reply to the disciples’ question, “What shall be the sign of thy coming [presence], and of the end of the world [age]?”—Matt. 24:3

In this prophecy, Jesus not only outlined signs by

which his people would know of his second presence and the end of the age, but also foretold important developments throughout the age which would be related to, and the concern of, his followers. The abomination of desolation is one of these.

Various titles and expressions are used in the Bible to describe the many aspects of the true messianic kingdom, each of which emphasizes some particular aspect or work of the kingdom—some, even its preparatory stages. This is also true of the great Antichrist system foretold in the prophecies. As we have seen, it also is given a variety of names, and is described from different standpoints. Daniel speaks of it as the “abomination that maketh desolate.”—Dan. 11:31

One of the principal ways the Antichrist made desolate has been in taking away the truth of God’s Word from the minds and hearts of God’s professed people. The foundation of all the truths of the divine plan is the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ—that ransom for all, which is to be testified to all in “due time.” (I Tim. 2:3-6) This basic truth of the divine plan, stated in other words, is the fact that Jesus gave his flesh, his humanity, in death as a substitute for the forfeited life of Adam and his race; that he did this once for all; that it is a continuing, ever-efficacious sacrifice on behalf of all mankind.

In both of Daniel’s references to the abomination that maketh desolate, he associates with it the taking away of what the **King James Version** describes as the “daily sacrifice.” Here the Hebrew word translated ‘daily’, actually means ‘continual’, and is so translated in the **Revised Standard Version**. It is not a reference to the daily typical sacrifices under the Mosaic Law, but to the great sacrifice, “once for all” (Heb. 10:10), which was designed to serve continually as a propitiation for the sins of the

church during the present age, and for the sins of the world in general during the age to come, the Millennium.—I John 2:2

This continual sacrifice was taken away, or set aside, by the Antichrist, and substituted in its place was the doctrine of the 'mass', which teaches that by intoning a few Latin words over a wafer of bread and a glass of wine, they are transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. Not only is the claim that the body and blood of Jesus are thus re-created and re-sacrificed not supported in the Scriptures, but the theory completely destroys the glorious truth of the Bible concerning the ransom, the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

While biblical language is frequently used in theological expositions, such as references to the shed blood of the Redeemer, Jesus' death on the cross, and so forth, this language is given an entirely different meaning than that presented in the Word of God. In the Scriptures, the shedding of blood symbolizes the giving up, or pouring out, of life. Jesus "poured out his soul unto death," wrote the Prophet Isaiah. (Isa. 53:12) But the Antichrist does not believe Jesus died! To the theologians in this system, Jesus was God, and surely God could not die.

No, their theory is that God came to earth incarnate in flesh and gave an exhibition of suffering, pretending to die on the cross. The theory is that sins are expiated by suffering. But it was not sufficient that God suffer once on the cross, so they cause him to suffer over and over again through the sacrifice of the mass. But even this is not enough, for after death, the individual for whom the masses are said must go to purgatory and continue to suffer—the length of time depending on how favorably he may be remembered by his friends still on the earth.

In Daniel's expression, the abomination that

maketh desolate, the Hebrew word translated 'desolate' literally means 'to stun', having as an overtone of meaning that the stunning, or rendering helpless, is by means of surprise or astonishment. How accurately this describes the desolating work accomplished by the Antichrist once its combined ecclesiastical and civil authority and power could not be successfully challenged!

In Daniel 8:11, this Antichrist system is referred to as "the prince of the host"—the host being the great mass of professing Christians—by whom the continual sacrifice was taken away. And the marginal translation of verse twelve explains that the host was given over to the prince "for the transgression against the daily [continual] sacrifice; and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced, and prospered."

In verses twenty-four and twenty-five of Daniel 8, we read further concerning the Antichrist, "His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power [but by the civil power of the various kingdoms of Europe]; and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace ['prosperity', **margin**] shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes [Christ]; but he shall [eventually] be broken without hand."

Another revealing prophecy of this same desolating abomination is found in Daniel 11:31-33: "They shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet

they shall fall by the sword, and by the flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.''

From these various prophetic word pictures we get a very clear view of the abomination that makes desolate. In addition to taking away the continual, ever-efficacious sacrifice of Christ, it cast down essentially all God's truth to the ground:

The truth concerning one true and living God of the Bible was cast down, and a triune god set up in his place.

The truth concerning man being mortal was cast down, and an immortal man invented instead.

The great truth that the wages of sin is death was cast down, and for it was substituted torture—eternal in hell for the willfully wicked, such as heretics; and long centuries of torment in purgatory for the less than willful sinners.

The truth that Christ would return and with his faithful followers establish a kingdom on the earth, was cast down, the unholy church-state rulership being substituted, with the pope claiming to be the vicar of Christ.

The true baptism into Christ's death, with its symbol of water immersion, was cast down, and infant sprinkling established as a substitute.

Justification by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ was cast down, with purchased righteousness through indulgences and the mass taking its place.

The truth concerning the restoration of paradise during the "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21), was cast down, and the falsehood adopted that time would one day end, and then the earth would be destroyed.

We might continue to name one after another of

the details of truth, and we would find that the abomination that makes desolate has been guilty of casting them all down to earth, and substituting others in their places. One of the most astonishing aspects of all this is that the Bible itself was relegated to a secondary place, and the authority of the pope exalted above the authority of the Bible. This means that a "thus saith the LORD" (Isa. 57:15; Jer. 2:2; Ezek. 25:15, etc.), through his inspired Word, had little or no weight in the minds and hearts of those who had been stunned by this abominable system.

We are glad that in the prophecies there is such a clear-cut distinction made between the host—the great mass of nominal believers—and the holy ones, "the people that do know their God." (Dan. 8:13; 11:32) Of necessity those who did know God were few in number. One reason was that this is not the age in the divine plan for the conversion of the world. One of the practices of the Antichrist was the forcing of its brand of Christianity upon virtually the entire population of the nations at the point of the sword. Obviously this did not make the people Christians.

During this age there is only one way to know God, and that is through the truth of his Word, and Bibles were extremely scarce during the Middle Ages. They all had to be written by hand; and then, in addition to this, the Antichrist banned their use. Many people were burned at the stake, their only 'crime' being that they possessed or read the Bible. It would, of course, be true then, even as now, that a large percentage even of those who had access to the Bible, and who read it, still would not know their God.

Daniel foretold that those who did know their God "shall be strong, and do exploits." (11:32) These were strong in the LORD, and without question stood up valiantly

in defense of the truth, but it was against overwhelming odds. Knowing God, they did their best to instruct others. "Yet," Daniel continued, "they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days."—11:33

It has been estimated that during the reign of the Antichrist, it was responsible for the death of fifty million people! And the death penalty was often inflicted by this desolating abomination in the cruelest of ways, such as burning at the stake; on the torture rack; tongues were cut out, and molten lead poured into the mouths of the victims—all this in the name of Christ, but contrary to every principle set forth in his teachings and by his example. Church historians, both Protestant and Catholic, verify the facts of these atrocities.

In this twentieth century, the civilized people of the world have been horrified by the cruelties imposed upon minorities by the ruthless dictators of our times, both fascist and communist. But none of these cruelties has been more devilish nor more widespread than the tortures of the 'Holy' Inquisition. And yet these were but the natural result of the God-dishonoring teachings of the Antichrist, particularly those doctrines relating to hell-fire and purgatory. Once the supporters of this system concluded that a person was a sinner according to their standards, they supposed that God would torture that individual eternally in more fiendish ways than their twisted minds were capable of imagining. So why not copy God, and inflict as much torture upon the poor soul as possible ahead of time?

No wonder the Bible describes a system capable of such practices as an abomination of desolation. The astonishing manner in which they departed from the true doctrines of the Word of God, and the practice of justice and love which they inculcate, truly did stun the professed Christian world throughout the Dark Ages. And while there

were a few who knew their God, and stood out valiantly against the errors which engulfed them, the vast majority succumbed, and as generation after generation passed, these hideous doctrines and practices became accepted by the rank and file of the people as genuine Christianity.

True, great reformers finally began to take their stand against the evils of the abomination, and doubtless they accomplished much good. But so far as God's love for his creatures is concerned, the reformers protested against the only doctrine that reflected any degree of mercy at all; namely, purgatory. It could be argued that a suffering soul could be released from purgatory, perhaps, but when the reformers abolished purgatory, only eternal torture was left for those not worthy of going to heaven. And with the various religious systems which are the outgrowth of the Reformation, this is still largely true.

Seemingly all were so stunned by the Antichrist that even though some could no longer endure its bondage or tolerate its corrupt practices, they could not return to normal thinking and to a sane study of the Word of God; for they continued to hold to the major errors previously taught, with the exception of purgatory and the mass. The inherent immortality of the soul; the trinity; the destruction of the earth; union of church and state—all of these errors continued to be upheld by nearly all the reformers.

And in many instances these false doctrines led to ungodly practices similar to those which they induced under the jurisdiction of the desolating abomination. John Calvin burned Servetus at the stake because he spoke out against the doctrine of the trinity. Latimer and Ridley were burned at the stake in England for the 'crime' of endeavoring to give the people the Bible. The spirit of cruelty and persecution continued, and only restricted opportunities prevented it from being just as widespread as in the Dark Ages.

The Beastly Kingdom

A “beast” is another of the prophetic symbolisms used in the Bible to emphasize certain characteristics of the Antichrist. This symbolism is introduced in the seventh chapter of Daniel, where we are told of four beasts, each representing a kingdom. Most students of prophecy agree that these four beasts represent the four successive empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. There were two phases of the Roman Empire—pagan and papal.

This changeover from pagan to papal is represented in Daniel’s prophecy of the four beasts by a little horn that grew on the head of the fourth, or Roman beast, replacing three of its ten horns. This horn, like the others, is interpreted to be a king, or kingdom. In the description of its characteristics we are given another definite identification of the Antichrist. We quote: “He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.”—Dan. 7:25

This prophetic time measurement, “time and times and the dividing of time,” is actually a period of three and one-half symbolic years. These are Jewish—lunar years—of three hundred and sixty days, with each day representing a literal year. The entire period, therefore, would be 1,260 years. This same measurement is referred to in Daniel 12:7, where it is given as a period reaching to the end of “these wonders,” one of the wonders being the abomination that makes desolate.—vs. 6

In Revelation 11:2 this time measurement is described as “forty and two months,” which again is three and one-half symbolic years. Here it is assigned to a period during which the “holy city,” the embryo kingdom class, is trodden “under foot.” This, too, was one of the accomplishments of Antichrist, the counterfeit kingdom.

In Revelation 11:3, the identical period is again mentioned, and described as a “thousand two hundred and threescore days.” In this prophecy we are told that the LORD would give his two witnesses power to prophesy during this period, even though “clothed in sackcloth.” Evidently this is a reference to God’s Word, his greatest of all witnesses in the earth, the Old and New Testaments making up the two witnesses. During this long era of the Dark Ages, these two witnesses had their testimony limited by the sackcloth of dead languages.

In Revelation 12:6, the “woman”—God’s true covenant people—are said to flee into the wilderness for a “thousand two hundred and threescore days.” There was a place prepared for the woman by God, a place of protection where she could be cared for and fed during the reign of Antichrist. This is again mentioned in the fourteenth verse of the chapter, the time measurement being referred to as a time, and times, and half a time, as in Daniel 12:7.

Finally, in Revelation 13:5, this same time measurement is assigned to the reign of the beast. Beginning with verse four we read, “They worshiped the beast, saying, Who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. . . . And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.”—Rev. 13:4-7

Note the similarity of this last quotation with Daniel 7:25, particularly with respect to the ‘great words’ which would be spoken by the ‘beast’. In Daniel’s vision, while these blasphemous words are said to be spoken by the horn on the head of the Roman beast, the thought is that this horn dominates the beast, the change in its status from pagan to papal having been made.

(Continued on page 37)

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Wabush CFLW-1340 7:15 a.m.

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Yellowknife CJCD-1240 9:00 a.m.

ONTARIO
Hamilton CKQC-1150 7:00 a.m.
Leamington CHYR-710 5:00 p.m.
St. Thomas CHLO-1570 10:45 a.m.

QUEBEC
Montreal CFMB-1410 5:15 p.m.

SASKATCHEWAN
Prince Albert CKBI-900 7:30 a.m.
Weyburn CFSL-1190 7:15 a.m.

YUKON
Whitehorse CKRW-610 9:30 a.m.

OVERSEAS BROADCASTS

BRITISH ISLES
Radio Caroline-Tues. KHZ 962 8:45 p.m.

BRITISH WEST INDIES
Grand Cayman Radio Cayman 9:30 a.m.

CEYLON
Columbo-Sat. Radio Sri Lanka 7:15 p.m.

HONG KONG
Radio Villa Verde-Fri. 6:00 p.m.

ITALY (Italian)
Europa Radio Milano 83.3-FM 11:30 a.m.
Euro Tele Radio Calabria-Fri. 5:30 p.m.
MHZ 102
Radio Corleone Centrale
FM-88-500 FM-92 11:00 a.m.

MEXICO (Spanish)
Mazatlan XECQ 8:30 a.m.

NEW ZEALAND
Dunedin 4XD 11:15 a.m.
Whakatane IXX 6:45 a.m.

NIGERIA
Radio Africa-Wed. 8:00 p.m.

PANAMA
Panama City HOQ 1250 10:30 a.m.

PHILIPPINES
Manila-Sat. DWXX 1026KH2 7:15 p.m.

SOUTH AFRICA
Joubert Park-Thurs. SWAZI Music
Radio 1400 & short-
wave 49 & 60 9:00 p.m.

SPAIN (Spanish)
Radio Gerona-Mon. 9:45 p.m.

TONGA
Nuku' Alofa-Mon.. 10:15 a.m.

URUGUAY (Spanish)
Montevideo-Sun..
Radio El Espectador 810 9:15 a.m.

VIRGIN ISLANDS
St. Croix WSTX 970 9:00 a.m.

The Bible Answers

Regular Television Broadcasts

We regret that we are unable to furnish the day and time of many of the broadcasts for the following stations. Where they are known, they have been given:

CALIFORNIA			MICHIGAN		
Chico (Sun.)	KMPN-5	8:30 p.m.	Ann Arbor (Sun.)	WHT-31	12:00 noon
FLORIDA			MISSISSIPPI		
Miami	WKID		Jackson	WAPT	
Jacksonville	Channel 17		MISSOURI		
GEORGIA			Springfield	KOLR	
Albany (Sun.)	WTSG-31	9:30 a.m.	NEW MEXICO		
Atlanta	WATL		Roswell	KSWs	
ILLINOIS			NORTH CAROLINA		
Champaign-Springfield	WBHW		Hickory	WHKY	
IOWA			OHIO		
Cedar Rapids	KTS-13		Dayton	WHIO	
Mt. Vernon-Lisbon (every weekday)	WMVL Cable	7:00 a.m.	TEXAS		
			Lubbock	KCBD	
			WEST VIRGINIA		
			Logan (Mon.)	Channel 12	
			GUAM (Sun.)	KUAM	9:00 a.m.

Satellite Cable Broadcasts

EVERY Sunday morning, over four hundred cable stations air **The Bible Answers** TV program in forty-three states, and Puerto Rico, at 9:00 a.m. EST, 8:00 a.m. CST, 7:00 a.m. MST and 6:00 a.m. PST.

If you subscribe to cable TV, consult the listing in your local newspaper or guide, for the station in your area which shows these fine educational programs. In some cases, stations tape the programs and show them at a different time than that mentioned above. You may have to check the complete listings to locate **The Bible Answers** program in your city. We are sure you and your family will find these programs inspiring and faith-strengthening—well worth watching. **If you own a satellite dish**, these programs can be seen on SATCOM F-3, TRANSPONDER-6, at the times listed above. □

(Continued from page 31)

History indicates that the reign of papacy lasted throughout the entire period of the Dark Ages, and in these prophecies we are given its exact length from God's viewpoint; namely, 1,260 years. As we have seen, the Antichrist is described in the Bible as having various characteristics, represented in different names given to it. As the Antichrist, it ruled. It was the counterfeit kingdom of Christ. As a beast it reigned also, and had great power, and it is the taking away of this power which the prophecies show was to take place at the close of the 1,260 years.

Historians generally, secular and religious, agree that the sovereign ruling power of papacy was shattered by Napoleon in 1799. Instead of going to Rome to be crowned by the pope, Napoleon insisted that the pope travel to France, and even then he did not permit the pope to crown him, but placed the crown on his own head, with the pope present, thus heaping humiliation upon him. The pope was permitted to continue with his religious activities, although, for a time, he was made prisoner by Napoleon. But not since then has he been recognized as having the right, or authority to crown or uncrown the kings of the old Roman world.

True, this mystery of iniquity was not completely destroyed by Napoleon, nor did the prophecies state it would be. What Daniel foretold would take place at the end of the 1,260 years was that the dominion of the beast would be taken away. And this, the prophecy indicates, was to "consume and to destroy it unto the end." (Dan. 7:25,26) Not until the true kingdom of Christ is established, and its power being wielded worldwide, will the last vestige of the Antichrist be removed and its corrupting influence wholly destroyed. □



Christian Life and Doctrine

Fullness of Joy

"Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures forevermore."—Psalms 16:11

IT IS the Creator's design that all of his creatures be happy, but to enjoy happiness it is necessary to be in harmony with him. Those who resist God's will are sure to find that, ultimately, their pathway leads to sorrow. In verse four of the sixteenth psalm, the prophet declares that "sorrows shall be multiplied" to those who "hasten after another god." Just as sorrow, suffering, and death are partners, so joy, happiness, and life go together. That is why we read, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures forevermore."

Our text is part of a prophecy relating to Jesus, and the fullness of joy referred to evidently relates to that which he experienced when, following his resurrection, he entered into the actual presence of his Heavenly Father. By faith he entered into that joy even while he was being persecuted unto death by his enemies. It was this "joy that was set before him" which enabled him to "endure the cross, despising the shame." (Heb. 12:2) Proving faithful under that test, he was exalted to "the right hand of the throne of God;" and the joys thus attendant upon his complete submission and faithfulness unto death were those of the divine life, the unmitigated pleasures of being forever in the actual presence of his beloved Heavenly Father.

Shortly before the Master finished his earthly course he bequeathed a blessed portion of his joy to his followers that their "joy might be full." (John 15:11) Thus it is possible for every faithful Christian to experience, in part at least, the joy which was the Master's strength—the joy of the Lord. Because of the

fact that we are invited to be partners with Jesus, in his death and in his resurrection, we can claim the same blessed promises of God which were the source of his comfort and joy. To the extent that our faith is able to lay hold upon these promises we can be rejoicing Christians despite the opposition of the world, the flesh and the devil.

We can "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2), keeping faith's vision focused upon the hallowed position in the actual presence of the Heavenly Father where there is fullness of joy, and where there are pleasures forevermore. The stronger our faith in the promised glory and joy of our future inheritance, the greater will be our measure of joy now. In this respect, as in others, our experiences should be similar to those of the Master. This means that the closer we keep to him by adherence to his Word and spirit, the greater will be our joy; and our daily testimony will be, not how much we suffer, but how great is our rejoicing!

Living the Christian life, however, does not release us from trouble—it increases our troubles. Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was persecuted and finally crucified, and we should not expect our experiences to be very different from his—the servant cannot expect to be above his Lord. (John 15:20) Paul rejoiced in his privilege of suffering with Christ, and from his own testimony we can see that while he suffered much, yet he was happy. (Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:12) Of his own experiences, St. Paul wrote: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; 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."—II Cor. 4:8-11

The sufferings of Christ are not the self-inflicted austerities which are practiced in some quarters of 'Babylon', in the belief that God does not want his people to be happy. The sufferings of the Christian are self-imposed, however, in the sense

that it is through faithfulness to the LORD and to the truth that the opposition of Satan and his allies is aroused against us. It was Jesus' faithful ministry of the truth that brought upon him the animosity of those who sat in darkness; and it is only as our sufferings are for the same cause of righteousness and truth that they are truly the "sufferings of Christ."—II Cor. 1:5

We have in the thought to suffer joyfully, what to human wisdom would surely be a paradox, yet to the Christian it is the true explanation of his life of rejoicing. The Christian is happy, not because all causes for unhappiness have been removed, but because he understands the purpose of his trials, having learned that it is his privilege to share in the sufferings of Christ, and he joyfully enters into that privilege. Our Christian rejoicing is not in the suffering itself, but in the fact that we are counted worthy to share in Christ's suffering. When we do good and suffer for it, we accept the experience as an evidence of God's favor upon us as his children, and the smile of his countenance is the source of our joy.—I Pet. 4:14; 2:20

The Christian's joy is thus seen to be the joy of faith. It is a joy which is not dependent upon material comforts, nor can physical suffering rob us of it. This does not mean, however, that a Christian needs to deprive himself of ordinary physical comforts in order to experience the joy of the Lord. Here again we need to distinguish between true Christian suffering and its causes, and the false ideas that some entertain concerning it. The Lord does not expect us to leave the seasoning out of our food so we will not enjoy eating it. He does not expect us to purposely make our beds hard so we cannot properly rest at night. He does not want us to close our eyes to the beautiful things of nature with which we are surrounded, nor to turn away from enjoying the sweet perfume of flowers.

But if Christian faithfulness in the ministry of the truth leads to the loss of physical comforts, of whatever sort they may be, such loss does not deprive us of our joy in the Lord, the joys of faith. If we chart our Christian course in such a way as to **pur-**

posely avoid the loss of earthly comforts, perhaps the Lord may allow us to enjoy the good things of this life, but it will be at the expense of the spiritual joys. But if we are faithful to our vows of consecration, irrespective of what the cost may be, then to whatever extent "sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flowers" are permitted by the LORD to cross our pathway, they will all "gain new sweetness" because of the higher vantage point from which we enjoy them.—No. 94, **Hymns of Dawn**

Let none get the erroneous thought that we make God happy by making ourselves unhappy. Such would be an entirely wrong viewpoint of Christian suffering and the purpose back of it. God's will for all of his creatures is that they be happy. Even inanimate things of creation, such as the trees, are spoken of in the Bible as clapping their hands with joy at the presence of the God of the whole earth. God invites us to share in the sufferings of Christ, not because he wants us to suffer, but because it helps to prepare us to share with Jesus in the future work of making an end of all suffering.

Some adherents of nominal churchianity, failing to understand the true meaning of the sufferings of Christ, have advanced the erroneous theory that the more melancholy one can be, the nearer he is living to the LORD. Out of this false theory has come the monastic life, austerities, doing of penances, etc. Probably there are times when God would be pleased for us to discipline the flesh in order that we may keep it more completely lined up for his service; but this is not because he does not want us to be happy.

Purposes of Suffering

One purpose of Christian suffering is that our faith might thereby be tested. Peter speaks of this, saying, "That the trial of your faith, being more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (I Pet. 1:7) Suffering is a trial of our faith because it puts to the test our

belief in the promises of God, and in the wisdom of God. God cannot, in the very nature of things, exalt anyone to the divine nature who does not have full confidence in him and in his plan. What if the fallen Lucifer had been immortal, indestructible! It would have meant that God's universe would have been marred forever.

God tests our faith in him and our devotion to him by permitting us to experience some very severe and exacting trials, and by making our service for him a sacrifice. For a time he may permit us to enjoy the sweets of his favor, causing the sun of his loving kindness to shine warmly upon us; and how we do rejoice in such happy experiences. During such times we should feed upon his Word and grow spiritually strong in him. Thus we are prepared for the fiery trials which are necessary for our testing and the crystallization of our characters. But these trials should not rob us of our joy in the LORD. Through faith we should lay hold upon the precious promises, and realize that while God is trying us, he will help us to bear it, and that finally, if we keep ourselves in his love, we shall come forth as gold. "In quietness and in confidence" shall be our strength, so we "rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him."—Isa. 30:15; Ps. 37:7

The divine purpose for us is that we may reign with Christ and share with him in dispensing kingdom blessings of life and joy to the willing and obedient of humanity. To be prepared for such a glorious future work, we need not only to be tested and tried for the proof of our faith, but that these very trials may enable us to be touched with a feeling of the world's infirmities and thus to be properly qualified to deal with them in the next age. Our knowledge of this purpose, and our faith in the divine wisdom and power back of it, should enable us to rejoice despite our trials. If this be so, then we are experiencing the joy of the LORD which is our strength.

This was the source of the Master's joy. He was not shielded from suffering, but he had full confidence in the divine purpose back of his suffering, and he was in full heart-harmony with that purpose. He knew that when the divine plan for the

world was complete there would be no more suffering or sorrow of any kind; that there would be gladness and rejoicing everywhere; and his joy sprang from a consciousness of the fact that the Father had honored him to have a part in accomplishing such a blessed program.

We can have the same joy in a degree commensurate with our faith and confidence in God and in his promises. The disciples on the storm-tossed Sea of Galilee lacked faith; they doubted, and their hearts were filled with fear. In their anxiety they cried to the Master to save them lest they perish. Jesus stilled the storm and the waves, and said to his disciples, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" (Matt. 8:26) If, when we are surrounded by the storms of life, we lose our joy in the LORD, we should pray, "LORD, increase our faith."—Luke 17:5

In Romans 12:12, the apostle associates the thoughts of joy, trials, and prayer, indicating that they are closely related in the Christian life. He says, "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer." Our rejoicing, our joy, is in the blessed hope set before us in the promises of God, and in the divine assurance of God's care for us. But we need to be tested, so while we rejoice in hope, we need also to be patient in tribulation. The Greek word here translated patient means to 'bear under', or 'submit to'. It is the thought expressed by the statement, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."—I Pet. 5:6

If we are truly humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God it means we will be rejoicing in our hope, and we will not be complaining against God's providences. Job, of old, said of the LORD, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." (Job 13:15) Surely a consecrated, spirit-begotten Christian should not be less submissive under the divine hand which molds and fits him for a position in the glorious kingdom of Christ. Our continued trust in the LORD should be such a deep, full trust, that from it will spring our rejoicing in him.

If our rejoicing is to continue despite the trials of the

way, we will need to keep very close to the LORD in prayer; so the apostle adds, "continuing instant in prayer." To be instant in prayer means that we will go to the throne of grace promptly in every time of need. It means that we properly recognize the LORD as the true source of our strength and the true fountain of our joy. Recognizing this, we go to him for our supplies, and gladly do we "continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."—Col. 4:2

Our prayers should not always be in the nature of requests. We should cultivate the habit of watching for the answers to our prayers, and watching with thanksgiving. Every experience in our Christian life should be an occasion for thanksgiving to the LORD. We should thank him even for our trials, because of their great value to us. If we fully realize our need for divine help and forgiveness, and properly appreciate what the LORD is daily doing for us, it will be hard to keep us away from the throne of grace; we will want to talk with the LORD often—very often!

Peaceable Fruits of Righteousness

In Hebrews 12:5-11, the apostle sets forth another purpose of Christian suffering. It is part of God's training program for the house of sons, who will constitute his ruling house during the Millennial Age. Even Jesus learned obedience through the things which he suffered. This does not mean that Jesus was ever disobedient. The thought is, rather, that he learned to be obedient even though the Heavenly Father permitted him to suffer. How necessary it was that this crucial test of obedience should be placed upon the one who was to be entrusted with the gigantic task of restoring obedience to the divine will throughout all the earth.

How necessary, too, that those who are following the Captain of their salvation (Heb. 2:9,10), should be subjected to the same kind of discipline. The thought of chastening is not necessarily that of punishment for wrongdoing from a moral standpoint. It is a form of the word chaste, which means 'pure'. To be

chastened, then, means to be made pure, or to be set apart wholly to the doing of the divine will. A man being trained as a soldier needs to be disciplined in order to know how to be a good soldier. To begin with, he will do many things the wrong way, so he needs to be trained. His training may not affect his moral standing as a man, but it does perfect him as a soldier.

It is thus that we are disciplined, trained, to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Our training does affect our whole being, morally, physically, and intellectually. It weans us away from all former viewpoints, hopes, and habits, and sets us apart wholly to the one great purpose to which we have dedicated our lives. Some of the training processes call for rebuking by the LORD, and chastening by his loving hand. If we do not have these experiences it means that we have not been accepted as sons. If we do have them, then this disciplinary training thus received is an evidence of God's love for us.

The chastenings of the LORD are not joyous, but grievous, the apostle explains in verse eleven; but afterwards, if we are properly exercised thereby, they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, and in this fruitage we can rejoice. We are not joyful in the suffering, as such, but because the suffering is an evidence that God is dealing with us as sons, and that is real cause for rejoicing! It is another way in which we experience the joy of the LORD, the joy of faith. It is a joy that is ours by faith despite the influences which, from the standpoint of the natural man, would rob us of all joy.

Suffering as Christians

In I Peter 4:12-16, the apostle associates Christian joy with Christian suffering, and shows clearly the proper relationship between the two. We are not to think it "strange concerning the fiery trial" by which the Heavenly Father tests us. On the contrary, we are to "rejoice inasmuch as we are partakers of Christ's sufferings." We are to thus rejoice in Christ's sufferings now, "that, when his glory shall be revealed, we may be glad also with

exceeding joy." What a prospect!

Yes, O blessed thought, we can rejoice because we are counted worthy of a share in Christ's sufferings, and have this evidence of God's favor. And, if we continue faithful to the end of the way, we will be glad with "exceeding joy." This exceeding joy is evidently the fullness of joy, mentioned in our text—Psalm 15:11. We can have great joy and rejoicing now, even while we are still suffering with Christ, and being trained for future glory with him. And we can be in his presence now, in the sense of enjoying the smile of his favor, and having the opportunity of coming to the throne of grace in prayer.

But part of our present joy—yes, a large part of it—is based upon our hope of finally entering into the actual presence of our beloved Heavenly Father. What a hope! There we will find the fullness of joy of which now we have but a foretaste. If we have caught the true vision of God, we will long to know him better and to be able to serve him perfectly. Our souls will pant for him as the "hart panteth after the water brooks." (Ps. 42:1) And when we hear that "Well done, . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," what rapture will it be! (Matt. 25:21) With such a prospect, how can any earthly thing be permitted to hinder our progress toward the heavenly goal?

Our present joys, deep and delightful as they should be, are but a foretaste of that fullness of joy yet to be realized. When that fullness of joy shall have been attained, it will be unmingled with trials and sufferings of any kind. The Hebrew word translated joy in our text, signifies, according to Professor Strong, 'blithesomeness', meaning 'gay' or 'merry'. There will be nothing then to mar the joy of the faithful. The trials will have been ended, the battles will have been fought, and the victory won. There will be no more dark valleys—only the overflowing joy of continuous partnership with the Majesty on high, in the happy work of scattering blessings far and wide throughout his universe.

And it is in God's presence that this blithesomeness will be experienced. As already noted, there is the actual presence of

God, and there is a symbolic presence—the latter being a state or condition of harmony with him. Christ and the church will, throughout all the ages of eternity, have the privilege of entering into the actual presence of the Heavenly Father, and tongue nor pen can describe the continuous and incomparable joy which will be theirs, fullness of joy indeed, and pleasures forevermore!

The "Great Multitude" (Rev. 7:9), and the "Princes in all the earth" (Ps. 45:16), and the restored world of mankind, will rejoice together in the blessings of Jehovah's symbolic presence. That is, they will have his full favor and blessing, and in that favor they, too, will rejoice with joy unspeakable. All tears will be wiped away. Tears are a symbol of sorrow, and it is God's purpose to make an end of sorrow. When this purpose is fully accomplished, there will be fullness of joy in every part of God's great universe, and all of his creatures will forever rejoice in the sunshine of his presence. □

Zion's Glorious Hope

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God.
He whose word cannot be broken,
Formed thee for his own abode.
On the Rock of Ages founded,
Naught can shake thy sure repose;
With salvation's walls surrounded,
Thou shalt triumph o'er thy foes.
Who would faint while such a prospect
Urges on to faithfulness,
Though thy present mournful aspect
Seem no cause for thankfulness?
Look not at the things beside thee;
Those behind thee have no worth:
Let the glorious hope before thee
Fill thy heart with rapturous mirth.

Christian Life and Doctrine



"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."—Romans 15:4

THE story of Ruth is laid in the time of the judges, before there was any ruler in Israel except Jehovah their God to enforce good behavior. Each man did what was right in his own eyes. This condition lasted for four hundred and fifty years. The Israelites, during that period, were perhaps the freest people the world has ever known, except when, from time to time, they were captive to other nations.

There was a famine in the land. God's covenant with them was that if they obeyed he would bless them in basket and store, in bountiful crops and rain, and in freedom from their enemies. But, if they disobeyed, then lack of rain and famine would be their portion, and they would become slaves to their enemies. So this famine was a chastisement. It was evidently very severe since it reached even the well-watered region around Bethlehem, whose very name means 'house of bread'. The ancient name given to the region was Ephratah, meaning 'bearing', or 'fruitful'.

A certain man, named Elimelech (meaning 'God is king'), went with his wife and two sons to sojourn in the land of Moab. The name of his wife was Naomi, with the significance of 'lovely', 'pleasant'. One son's name was Mahlon, the other,

Chilion. God did not bless this move to Moab. The father feared he could not live in Bethlehem, and hardly had he arrived in Moab when he died. He had refused God's instruction, by his leaving. Instead of crying out to God and trusting him in Bethlehem, they went to a land of idol worship. Seeking to avoid one affliction, they fell into a worse one; they escaped famine, but death overtook them in a foreign land.

Mahlon and Chilion did not go home, but proceeded, in violation of their covenant Law, to marry heathen wives. (Deut. 7:3) Now Naomi had no property, no husband, and soon after both sons died. Her happiness had turned to sorrow and bereavement; she stood alone in a foreign land. What should she do now?

Hearing that God had visited his people and the famine was ended, and because her heart had never been fully in sympathy with their going, Naomi again turned her face and heart toward her native land. She felt that her two daughters-in-law would be sacrificing too much to leave their kindred and friends to go with her to a strange land, sharing her poverty, so she urged them to return to their mother's house. But they wept and told her that they loved her too much to desert her in her hour of need. They insisted they would go with her and share whatever lot came her way. Naomi replied, "Jehovah grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Jehovah deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me." (Ruth 1:8,9) They answered, "Surely we will return with thee to thy people." This is indeed a scene of unparalleled love and tenderness. What has produced such love?

During the ten years of married life these two girls had entered an Israelitish family, and breathed a good atmosphere. Marriage and home life are the real mirror of religion and worship. Israel had distinguished itself, not merely by the name of its God, but by its life at home, and in the family by faithfulness and love to wife and child. These two girls were gratefully attracted to the home life of Israel. They requited the kind and tender treatment

they had received with self-sacrificing love. They not only had heard the religion of Jehovah confessed in the land of Moab, they had seen it lived at home.

Now, gently and delicately, Naomi told them they could not hope for a husband and home in Israel, for what her sons had done in marrying foreign wives was against the Law and custom of Israel. In Moab, no doubt, the youthful widow would marry again, and find protection, safety, and honor in the home of her new husband. This was Naomi's generous wish—"Jehovah grant you that you may find rest, . . . in the home of her [a] husband" in your own land. The word here translated rest has great beauty in its meaning. It has the thought of a permanent home, a hearth-home of love and understanding, rest of heart and mind.

Though she had deep love for Naomi, Orpha's, Ruth's sister, natural desire for a home was stronger, and she saw there was no hope of a husband or home in Israel. She counted the cost and felt it was too much. She was like many in the Gospel Age who delight in the Gospel message and love righteousness, but count the cost of becoming one of God's people now, by consecration, too much, and so turn back. We wonder if in after years Orpha may have thought of Ruth and Naomi, or if she heard of Ruth's good fortune, and that God had blessed Ruth's choice.



But Ruth's love was deeper. Naomi's character, her loving, sunny, self-sacrificing disposition had won a similar love and gratitude in Ruth. Naomi had made Israel and Israel's God lovely in the eyes of Ruth, so she wished to go to a people who were as amiable as Naomi and her family. A God who had such worshipers must be a lovely God!

Her answer to Naomi is the most beautiful and complete expression of self-sacrificing love found in any language: "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: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if ought by death part thee and me." So when Naomi saw that Ruth was stedfastly minded to go with her, she protested no more. Ruth had made her decision; she was no longer a Moabite at heart.

Those who follow Jesus, giving up all of their earthly prospects, are very much like Ruth. Such is consecration. To these, however, God is better even than he was to Ruth, far better than we can fully know. It is to these that he says, "Hearken, O daughter, . . . 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." (Ps. 45:10) There is a deep lesson here for us.

"So they two went until they came to Bethlehem." (Ruth 1:19) What a sad home-coming for Naomi! No home, no friends, only poverty; no family but this one daughter-in-law, who was a jewel! Naomi's resources were exhausted, but God's patience and lovingkindness were not. Already he had begun to order and arrange for her blessing as she turned toward Israel.

The town was stirred at her coming, and they asked, "Is this Naomi?" She answered, "Call me not Naomi, but call me Mara [bitterness] . . . for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." (vss. 20,21) Naomi did not try to shift the blame to someone else, but accepted the weight of it herself. She said, "I went out full, and Jehovah hath brought me home again empty." Yes, it was Jehovah who brought her back, even though she did not know he was watching over them. O, love that wilt not let me go! His love was drawing her back again into the right way.

God loves us too deeply to let us go astray without warnings and troubles that are intended to turn us back into the

right path. The LORD said, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." (Hos. 11:4) God in his love used trouble to bring Naomi back to him. So too he often does with the members of his church.

The neighbors did not help them much, but turned back to their own pursuits. Ruth volunteered to glean what she could of the barley grain in the nearby fields, as it was harvest time. It was no easy offer, but a miserable task for one who was formerly prosperous. Possibly she would be treated as a beggar, harshly spoken to, if not actually maltreated by rude reapers. She would have to pass the day in the heat and distress in order, at eventide, weary and hungry, to bring home a little barley. But her love for Naomi gave her courage and strength to make light of this. She did not idle or bemoan her lot, but with a good will did what she could with what she had.

The LORD had made laws in Israel to provide for the poor and the stranger, because the Israelites had once been strangers in the land of Egypt; see Deuteronomy 24:19-22. The corners of the fields, and some of the grain were to be left for the poor and the stranger to glean. So Ruth went forth into the fields, and Jehovah directed her steps, though she did not know it, "and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz" (Ruth 2:3), who was of the kindred of her dead father-in-law, Elimelech.

While she was gleaning, Boaz came from Bethlehem and looked over the harvest field. His greeting to the workers showed a fine, godlike character. He said to the laborers, "Jehovah be with you," and they answered, "Jehovah bless thee." (vs. 4) That this was not merely a polite greeting, but a sincere wish, is shown by his later talk with the overseer, who was of the same spirit as his master.

Boaz watched the workers, and noticed that one woman who gleaned industriously was serious, in deep earnestness, quiet and reserved. Her manner showed she was not a common maid-servant. He asked the overseer who she was.

Like his master, the overseer knew his workers, the poor and needy also. She, who had so long been mistress herself, had not the manner of one grown bold in beggary. The overseer told Boaz that since morning the woman had not ceased to glean, and had rested but very little in the house. This praise induced Boaz to speak to her, and he



asked her to remain gleaning in his field, where she would be safe. He told his reapers not to reproach her, though she was a foreigner. She answered, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?"—vs, 10

Note the manly behavior of Boaz. He did not take advantage of his position to interfere in any way with her right, nor to wound her self-respect by too much liberality. He was careful in his kindness to respect her, even though she was a stranger. He even instructed his binders quietly to drop a handful now and then while binding the sheaves so her gleaning would be more fruitful, and told her to glean closer to the maidens binding the sheaves.

At the noon hour rest, he invited her to eat with the others of the reapers and binders, and even passed her bits of parched corn, and invited her to drink of the sour wine used for refreshing the reapers. Boaz told her he had heard of how much she had done to help Naomi—how she had left her father and mother, and her native land to come to live among a strange people. His next statement is most beautiful. He did not say, "I will help you," but rather, "The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."—vs. 12

Her sacrifice was too noble and too deep to expect man to give it full value. Jehovah can reach more deeply into the heart and life, and give more complete satisfaction. He wished that a full reward be given her, for she had come to seek shelter and trust under the protective power of the covenant-keeping God, amid a covenant people.

These words of Boaz were perhaps the first sunbeams that had broken through the grief and tears of many weeks. She had lived with the sense of loss of family and home and people. Now she was told about the God of Israel and his grace by an Israelite other than Naomi, and heard the voice of blessing from another of God's people. Truly, she doubtless thought, this must be a great God and a great people. In gratitude she said, I have long been sad, and "thou hast comforted me." I look for no reward, but thou hast spoken to the heart of thine handmaid, "though I be not like one of thine handmaidens."—vs 13

Her answer raised her still higher in the esteem of Boaz. It showed a refined nature. Many people in her place would have said that in truth they were not accustomed to such labor, and then begin complaining. Ruth was unassuming and reserved, and not looking for any favors from others. She had youth and good health, and delighted to do what she could for herself. Boaz showed her kindness, not as a relative, but because of her excellence. A word of kindness coming to a loving heart like hers is like morning dew on a thirsty field!

Ruth went back to gleaning. She did not slack her hand, nor assume airs, nor take things easy, because the master had favored her. She worked diligently till evening, and even stayed over to thresh the grain. She had gleaned about an ephah of barley, which is about three and one-half pecks. She also took home to Naomi some of the food she had saved from dinner.—vs. 18

Naomi realized that Jehovah's hand must be in all this—that he had guided Ruth to the field of Boaz and taken care of her. Naomi said, "Blessed be he of the LORD [Jehovah], who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. (vs. 20) It is a

kindness to the dead to look after their loved ones. So she advised Ruth to abide in that field throughout the harvest. Ruth reported Boaz' words, "Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended my harvest." Note how the wise mother-in-law gently corrected that. "It is good . . . that thou go with his maidens, that they [anyone] meet [fall upon, **margin**] thee not in any other field." (vss. 21,22) Here was safety sent by Jehovah.

When the harvest was over and the heaps of grain were still on the threshing floor, Boaz himself came down to keep watch over them. Naomi said to Ruth, "Shall I not seek rest for thee [a hearthhome and shelter]?" (Ruth 3:1) What was now done was in accord with the laws of the land. See Deuteronomy 25:5-10. It rested on the desire to preserve not only the national spirit, but also the national body. The nation lived in its families, like a tree in its branches. If a man died without children, it was as if a branch withered. To remedy this, a new branch was grafted into the tree by the nearest male relative marrying the widow. Each family must take care that no branch died out. But no one who was not a blood relative could redeem anything for a family.

Does not this tell us why Jesus had to become not only a human being, but a human baby nourished with the blood of Mary, and born and brought up like other human beings, growing up to be a man? He was not to be created a full-grown, perfect human being as Adam was, but to have the blood of Adam in his veins, and, as a kinsman, to redeem the human race. How wonderfully God thus opens up to us more clearly the depths of his purposes, and thus by the study of the Old Testament increases our understanding of the New Testament.

Ruth was to go by night so Boaz could not see her, and after he retired and was asleep she was to gently clear a place at his feet, and draw over herself a corner of the covering without waking him. But, turning in his sleep, his feet came in contact with her, and he awoke with a start. Boaz said, "Who art thou?" She answered, I am "Ruth, thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman." (Ruth

3:9) What did she mean? The **Massoretic**, or standard Jewish text, defines the words "thy skirt," to mean 'thy wings', that is protection, symbolized by the covering being spread over her. She was appealing to him to do what the Law commanded.

Here again, the innate nobility of Boaz shines out. He was a man of God, an Israelite indeed, not only before men, but before the LORD. He said, "Blessed be thou of Jehovah, my daughter: for thou hast shown more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not the young men, whether rich or poor."—Ruth 3:10

What did he mean? How was she showing more kindness in this action than when, at the beginning she forsook all to go with Naomi and engage in gleaning work? This was a harder thing for Ruth to do than to glean, for this was more delicate and more dangerous. To claim this right was more painful than the gleaning, for she was exposing herself to possible misunderstanding. But her deep love for Naomi and self-forgetfulness surround this action with a glow of purity.

In order to procure honor and love in Israel for her mother-in-law, and to save the name of her dead husband from extinction in Israel, she did what only a chaste woman, inspired by the obedience of love, dares to do, and what the polluted minds of impure souls can never understand. To a noble mind it is more of a martyrdom to face the possibility of appearing as a sinner than to suffer hardship for the sake of virtue. Naomi must have trusted God very deeply to have advised this step.

Boaz promised to call the matter to the attention of the nearest kinsman, as there was one nearer than himself; and if he would not do his part, then Boaz would take care of it. So she lay there till early morning, but it was still dark when she went away. Before she left, Boaz filled her veil with barley grain, up to six measures of barley.

Why six measures—why not seven, or five? It would give a hint to Naomi that in any event Ruth would obtain a resting place. Six is the symbol of labor and service, followed by

seven, the time of rest. Men were to work six days, and rest on the seventh. Whoever served six years was released on the seventh. (Exod. 21:2,3) Thus Boaz was indirectly sending Naomi a message that the period of labor was past and the time of rest was at hand.

Boaz gathered ten men of the elders of the city, and had them sit in the gate by him. The gate was the place of judgment. (Gen. 19:1) When the nearer relative came by, Boaz accosted him, and laid the matter before him. At first the other relative said he would redeem the land for Naomi, but when Boaz called his attention to the Law—that he must marry Ruth—he said he could not, for fear of marring his own inheritance.

How could he mar his inheritance? Evidently he feared to marry Ruth, because she was a Moabitess. He knew what had happened to Mahlon and Chilion, so he refused. But Ruth had become an Israelite in faith and had left behind Moab, its people, and had joined the covenant people. Boaz knew this, and did not press the matter. So the other relative took off his shoe and gave it to Boaz.

The shoe, or sandal, is first a symbol of motion and wandering, but also of rest and possession. See Deuteronomy 11:24. "With shoes on your feet," meant a journey is ahead. (Exod. 12:11) The expression in Deuteronomy, chapter eleven, evidently refers to possession, something one actually had and could tread on with his feet at pleasure. So when this relative handed over his shoe to Boaz, it symbolized that he thus surrendered to Boaz all rights and claims to possession. Had he done his part, he would have set his shoe on Naomi's inheritance and thus claimed it as redeemed. Ruth was the heiress of Mahlon, and must go with the possession. So Boaz redeemed the land, being a blood relative, and married Ruth.

In Deuteronomy 25:5-10 we have this law and custom described in detail. And in Psalm 60:8 and 108:9 we have an example of this custom: "Over Edom will I cast out my shoe," which means that the LORD will claim Edom as part of the

redeemed possession and inheritance, as shown in verses seven and eight to be true also of other tribes.

This story and procedure of redemption illustrates well the work that Jesus performed in redeeming Adam's race. As there was no other redeemer, Jehovah furnished one in the person of his only beloved Son. (Isa. 63:5) But Jesus was to be blood-related to Adam, as well as to become a human being. He was the seed of the woman who would redeem mankind and bruise the serpent's head. (Gen. 3:15) So, as Luke tells us, the life spark of our Lord Jesus was transferred by divine power into the womb of Mary, and in due time Jesus was born a perfect human baby. He did not inherit the death sentence, because God was his father, not Joseph. (Luke 1:35) When he was of full age, thirty years old (Luke 3:21-23), he offered himself as a ransom for all, and carried out the contract to the end on the cross. With this ransom price he bought back, redeemed, Adam and all his children, as well as Adam's inheritance, the earth.

Also, he will marry a bride—one who was a daughter of Adam. This contract is witnessed by the elders, the ancient fathers and prophets, in the place of judgment—before the throne of God. Also, he planted his shoe upon the inheritance; for, as the Redeemer, he walked up and down over the possession for three and one-half years. Our Lord and his bride being spirit beings in the resurrection, will not need the inheritance, so it will be returned to the children of Adam.

Ruth pictures the Gentiles, who come into the family of God by a full consecration of their all, leaving behind their earthly hopes and lands and families, and, as new creatures, are taken into the family of God. They become the bride of the Prince, and are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God—Jesus—who gave his life a ransom for all. And, like Ruth, they will become the mother of kings.

Ruth gave up her home, and God gave her a far richer one; she gave up a husband, and God gave her a prince in Israel; she gave up children, and God made her the mother of kings, for

she was the ancestor of David and of Jesus, the King of kings. She gave up her own people, and God gave her a place among the covenant people; she gave up the hope of land and country, and God gave her the inheritance of Naomi, and a share with her prince in his rich estate. So God deals with his church, and gives her a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—II Cor. 4:17 □

"THEY that feared the LORD spoke often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."—Malachi 3:16,17

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Encouraging Letters

PROGRAM BRINGS JOY

Dear Sir: I watch your program on cable television, and I must share with you how very much I enjoy it. I watch it every Sunday morning. It's a great program—the way it is put together, everything about it is nice. I would like a copy of "The Future of Israel and the World." Thank you very much. —NE

FILM WAS A BLESSING

Dear Brethren in Christ: We have just shown your film, "Unto Us a Child Is Born," and received many blessings from it. We showed it to our youth group, and their comments were wonderful. We held a discussion on the scriptures given in the film, and all seemed to understand and appreciate it very much. Would you please send us some copies of your booklet, "Jesus, the World's Savior," described at the close of the film. We can distribute twenty-five of these. Thank you for your help. In his service. —MI

"WE LOVE THE LORD"

Dear Brethren of the Dawn: I am asking for renewal of my Dawn magazine. I think it gets better all the time—goes into the Scriptures deeper—or could it be that I understand it a little better? I especially enjoy the Sunday School Lessons. You bring up so many related scriptures to bring out the deeper things that are not seen by the casual reader. Each Sunday morning I go to my neighbor's house, and we study the Sunday School Lessons together. She doesn't yet see the earthly phase of the kingdom clearly, but she knows her Bible well, and I can have fellowship with her. I am 84 and she is 87. We both love the LORD, and are consecrated to him. —AL

FEELS BETTER NOW

Dear Friends: How pleased I was to get your letter, and the booklet, "Hope." I do want to thank you. It made me feel better to know someone is thinking and praying for me. Again I say, thanks! —MO

FINDS US AGAIN!

Dear Friends: Ever since I can remember I have been watching your television program, "The Bible Answers." I remember watching your program as a child while waiting for my parents to get ready for Sunday School.

Your teachings were always so clear and simple, yet profound. Then I would hear others talk about hell and judgment in such horrible and frightening terms. It never brought peace to my heart, and would only confuse and frighten me. Years later I decided the Christian life was not for me, that I could not serve a God who would allow his creation to burn in literal fire for all eternity. It was just contrary to the God I knew about in my heart.

Now just the other day I turned the channel and heard the Gospel proclaimed so clearly and simply and wondered who it was. At the end of the program I found it was the same program I had seen as a child, "The Bible Answers." Can you send me a copy of all the literature you have available. I know

this is a tall request, but, believe me, it will help. I want to know about the true Christ Jesus, the kingdom of God, salvation, the Holy Spirit, and also about hell. I will be waiting for your material soon. God bless you! Sincerely yours. —CA

AN OLDTIME FRIEND

Dearly Beloved in Christ: Greetings in the name of our Lord! Looking back through the past year, I have appreciated The Dawn magazine, and the spreading of the truth via radio, television, etc., and also the dear brethren at The Dawn who make it all possible. How we look forward to the answer to our prayer, "May thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." I am unable to attend conventions as in the past, but my Heavenly Father, his Son, and my brethren in Christ, are very precious to me. The hymn, "How Great Thou Art," is a special one to me. May our dear Heavenly Father continue to guide, bless, and direct you as you serve him. Fervent Christian love. —MI

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts

FEBRUARY 5—"This is the will of God [concerning you], even your sanctification."—1 Thessalonians 4:3— (Z '99-4 Hymn 47)

FEBRUARY 12—"Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."—James 1:4— (Z '93-295 Hymn 313)

FEBRUARY 19—"Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unfaithful nothing is pure; but both their mind and conscience are defiled: they profess to have known God, but by their works they renounce Him, being abominable and disobedient, and as to every good work worthless."—Titus 1:15,16—**Diaglott** (Z '99-214 Hymn 344, Appendix K)

FEBRUARY 26—"Rejoice in the LORD alway: and again I say Rejoice."—Philippians 4:4— (Z '03-7 Hymn 206)

1987 Memorial Supper Date

THE proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 12th.

We have a complete Memorial service available for isolated brethren or for any who care to have it, on both audio and video cassette. The audio cassette service can be purchased for \$3.00, or is available on loan. Write to: Recorded Lecture, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. The video cassette Memorial service can be purchased for \$6.00, or is also available on loan upon request to: Dawn Video Cassette Service, P.O. Box 4355, North Hollywood, CA 91607.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." —Hebrews 11:1-3

Speakers' Appointments

MINISTERING THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF CHRIST

These speakers are routed through the Pilgrim Department of The Dawn or by classes associated with the pilgrim services. Their visits are furnished free upon request whenever possible. Write to: Dawn Bible Students Association, East Rutherford, NJ 07073.

B. Brown		Dallas, TX	2
Fresno, CA	February 8	San Antonio, TX	4
		Tucson, AZ	6
B. Gorecki		Phoenix, AZ	8
Sacramento, CA	February 13-15	Victorville, CA	10
		Los Angeles, CA	11
G. Jeuck		Sacramento, CA	13-15
Sacramento, CA	February 13-15	Upper Lake, CA	17
		Arcata, CA	18
E. Lamel		Los Angeles, CA	22
San Gabriel Val., CA	February 8	Phoenix, AZ	25
E.K. Penrose		H. Snyder	
Shreveport, LA	February 1	Sacramento, CA	February 13-15

Obituaries

The following brethren have recently finished their Christian course. We wish to express our sincere sympathy to the families and friends in their loss of these dear ones. We appreciate information concerning any brethren to be included in this list.

Sister Laura Montgomery, Cincinnati, OH—August 24

Sister Ellen Barry, Bakersfield, CA—December 21. Age, 75

Sister Ellen Geisinger, Pottstown, PA—December 27. Age, 87

"Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."—Revelation 14:13

Conventions

These conventions are listed at the request of the individual classes who are sponsoring the gatherings.

SACRAMENTO, CA, February 13-15—Sierra Inn Travelodge, 2600 Auburn Blvd. Mrs. E.F. Lankford, 6000 19th Ave. 95820
Phone: (916) 457-0569

DELAWARE VALLEY, PA, February 22—Royce Hotel, Langhome. Contact: Barbara Marshall, 291 Oaktree Drive, Levittown, PA
Phone: (215) 949-3876

FLORIDA CONVENTION MARCH 7,8,9—Howard Johnson Hotel, 304 West Colonial Dr., Orlando, FL., Contact: Stephen Jeuck, 471 Kentia Rd., Casselberry, FL., 32707
Phone: [305] 834-7592

ROCKLAND, NY, March 8—Bear Mountain State Park, Overlook Lodge, Bear Mountain, NY.
Contact: Dawn Shallieu, 1041 Johnston Dr., Watchung, NJ 07060

NEW ORLEANS, LA, March 14,15—Airport Howard Johnson's Motel, 6901 Veterans Memorial Blvd. Contact: Mrs. Samuel Heron, 4513 St. Anthony 70122
Phone: (504) 288-1553

FRESNO PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 27-29—Episcopal Conference Center, Oakhurst, CA. Contact: A.W. Abrahamsen, 4689 Shields Ave. 93726

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 4, 5—Macomb Community College, 14500 12 Mile Road, Warren, MI

LOS ANGELES, CA, April 19—Golden State Masonic Lodge, 933 So. Hoover St., Los Angeles.
Contact: Wade Austin, 21207 Wilder Avenue, Lakewood 90715

ENGLISH RECORDED LECTURE SERVICE

WE WISH to remind our British readers that a Recorded Lecture Service, operated under the auspices of the English Dawn, is continuing to be available. They provide, on loan, recorded lectures on audio cassettes. Also, **The Dawn**

magazine is read onto tape each month for those who have difficulty seeing. Service is for British Isles only. Direct your request to:

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