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“Whatsoever He Saith Unto You, Do It”

(John 2:5)

(Convention Address)

THESE words, recorded in the 2nd chapter of John’s Gospel, were spoken by our Lord’s mother and directed to the servants in a household at Cana of Galilee on the occasion of a wedding feast.

Some one has said, “These words may well be adopted by all the children of God as a motto upon which their lives may be built and patterned”—‘Whatsoever *He* sayeth unto you, do it.”

The words of Christ are of particular interest to all His footstep followers. Not only is He our Redeemer and Lord, having rescued us from the curse of sin and death, but He is also our divinely appointed Teacher. “For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God.” (John 3:34.) Again He said—“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” (John 6:63.) Concerning our Lord, the Father uttered these words of loving commendation to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, — “This is my beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased; *hear ye him.*” (Matt. 17:5.)

It is very important that as disciples (learners) of Jesus Christ we “take heed *how* we hear.” (Luke 8:18.) May it be that the attitude of our Master toward His Father may also be our attitude—“I delight to do thy will, O my God.”

One of the first instructions given by our Lord to His disciples is found in Mark 1:14, 15,—“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; *repent ye, and believe the gospel.*” Christ’s first command to fallen men is—“repent, and believe.” To repent means “to think differently,” to reform our minds and hearts and lives; to feel compunction, regret or contrition because we have sinned against

God, and violated His righteous laws. This command is applicable to both Jewish and Gentile hearers, as shown in the Apostle Paul’s words in Acts. 20:21—“Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” True repentance implies not only genuine sorrow for one’s sins, but also leads to a reformation of the life. It produces a change of heart and mind and conduct.

The Psalmist tells us, “The sacrifices of God (those which God regards) are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God Thou wilt not despise.” (Psa. 51:17.) The Lord is not interested in showy

ceremonial; He is seeking humble and contrite hearts that will respond to His loving-kindness. Once true repentance takes place, and the mind becomes hostile to sin, then conversion is in order. The next requirement after repentance is—*“believe the gospel.”*

We see our need of a Saviour, and we are directed to Christ as “the Lamb of God that beareth away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29.)

Paul said, — “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” (Rom. 1:16.) With thankful, humble hearts, we receive by faith this divinely provided Saviour. “The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” (1 Cor. 1:18.) “God has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Cor. 5:21.)

Jesus said,—“Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28.) And again,—“Ye believe in God, believe also in me; I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:1, 6.) “I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst . . . This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:35, 40.)

As members of Adam’s fallen race we could do nothing to commend ourselves to God; so “God commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:8.) Faith in the ransom sacrifice of Christ brings us into the condition of justification before God. (Rom. 5:1.) To the justified believer, our Lord has a further word of instruction, — “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.” (Matt. 11:29.) Also,—“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Matt. 16:24; Luke 14:26, 27; Rom. 12:1.)

So we enter the school of Christ, and our minds now enlightened by the holy spirit of God, we begin to learn of Christ. Let us remind ourselves that the heart condition of contrition and humility are not character traits which we leave behind after we fully consecrate our lives to the Lord, for they are qualities of heart that all the consecrated must continue to possess in an abounding measure. A contrite heart is one which has a quiet, deep, continual sorrow for acts not in harmony with righteousness.

The Scriptures assure us that our Heavenly Father is particularly sympathetic toward those who are of a broken and contrite heart, who realise that they are imperfect, and who desire to be in accord with Him. To such He is ever near— “to revive the spirit of the humble,” to give them strength. He does not trample them to the dust, nor does He turn away from their tears and supplications, for He is, as He proclaimed Himself to be, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.” (Exod. 34:6; Isa. 57:15.) However, in order to receive His blessings and mercies, the recipient must have the proper attitude of mind and heart. We must walk humbly with God. (Mic. 6:8.)

We note that our Lord frequently instructed His disciples to cultivate the quality of humility. “Learn of me,” He said, “for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matt. 11:29.) Also our Lord’s reply to the disciples’ question,—“Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” is most helpful. Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, “Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 18:1-4.)

Also our Lord said, “He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that cloth serve. I am among you as he that serveth.” (Luke 22:26, 27.) Then, too, the lesson of the

washing of the disciples' feet. (John 13:1-17.) It seems that our Lord waited while "supper was preparing," to give the disciples opportunity of rendering this service of washing the feet of those present. When no one of them volunteered the service, our Lord took towel and basin, "and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." Then, later, He said, —"If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet; I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you. . . . If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Another of our Lord's "sayings" which we do well to examine carefully is found in Matthew 7:1-5. "Judge not (harshly) that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Commenting on these words of our Lord, another has said, — "All true disciples (learners) should give earnest heed to this injunction, and should understand that it contains a very important lesson, which, unlearned, will render them unready for the great examination, unready for graduation, unready for the kingdom, because in their examination this will be one of the tests. If they have been fault - finding, cynical, hypercritical, etc., judging others harshly and uncharitably, it will be a clear token that they have not developed the spirit of Christ, the spirit of love which is full of kindness and consideration; hence such would be judged or condemned as unfit for the kingdom, for according to our way of judging others we will be judged — since nothing else will better demonstrate our true spiritual condition—the presence or absence of love.

"Whatever measure of mercy and generosity we mete out to others will be the measure of divine mercy that will be extended to us. If we could all have well impressed upon our hearts this lesson from the great Teacher's lips, how wonderfully it would affect our attitude toward others, in thought as well as in deed; how generous, how forgiving, how sympathetic for the weaknesses of others we would become; how the spirit of Christ, the spirit of love in our hearts would manifest itself in our words and deeds.

Rafters in Their Eyes

"Emphasising this lesson, our Lord *suggested* that those who are always finding fault with the 'brethren' who, like themselves, are seeking to walk in the narrow way—who can never see the noble efforts of the brethren to copy the Master, but are continually picking at them, are the very ones who have the greatest of faults in themselves— lovelessness. The exaggeration of our Lord's words of reproof to this class seems to imply a vein of sarcasm, for literally He says, Why do you stare so at your fellow who is troubled with a grain of sawdust in his eye, while you have a whole rafter in your own eye? All the 'brethren' are more or less troubled with difficulties of one kind or another, weaknesses of the flesh—all have the treasure of the new nature in imperfect earthen vessels — marred by original sin. 'There is none righteous, no, not one,' absolutely perfect. Yet the brethren whose hearts are full of love, even though they have sawdust in their eye of faith, or intellectual discernment or spiritual discernment, and perhaps also splinters in their hands, which affects all the deeds of life and render their work imperfect and though many of them have splinters in their feet also, so that their walk is by no means perfect, as they desire it to be—yet if they have the spirit of faith and of love and sympathy, the spirit of Christ, they are His, and far more acceptable to Him than any could possibly be who are devoid of the spirit of love and sympathy, and who therefore in this parable are represented as wholly perverted in their judgment of others, because possessing so little of the Lord's spirit and so much of the spirit of the adversary—the great 'accuser of the brethren.'

"This loveless, fault-finding class the Lord denominates hypocrites. Why? Because in finding fault with others they are evidently wishing to give the inference that they are not afflicted with the same malady of sin themselves; they evidently wish to give the impression that they are holy, and since they know in their own hearts that this is untrue, and that they have many failings, many imperfections — therefore their course is hypocritical, false, displeasing to God. Their claim that their fault-finding is prompted by love

for the erring and a hatred of sin is deceptive and hypocritical, as our Lord's words clearly show; otherwise they would find plenty to do in hating and condemning and battling with their own sins and weaknesses,—casting out their own rafter of self-conceit and hypocrisy. The experience thus gained would make them very tender and merciful and loving in their assistance of others.

“All of the ‘brethren’ should carefully view this picture which our Lord portrayed, and should note well to see whether or not they have any of the evil disposition of heart—fault-finding, nagging, harsh criticism and denunciation —different degrees of the same fault. If they find any trace of such a ‘beam’ of lovelessness and self-conceit in their spiritual eye, they should go at once to the great Physician, and have it thoroughly eradicated, that they thus may speedily become gentle, sympathetic assistants to the ‘brethren,’ and be prepared as successful surgeons and physicians for the great work of the Millennial Age — the kindly and sympathetic opening of the blind eyes of humanity and the healing of all the works of sin.

“In verses 7-9 of Matthew 7 our Lord gives us directions as to how the tendency to harsh judgment of others may be overcome, and the wrong qualities may be eradicated. We are to ask of the Lord the needed measure of love and sympathy which will hinder us from harsh judgment of others, and which will help us in correcting our own defects.

If we ask sincerely, truly, we will receive His help in this direction. And while asking, it is our duty to be seeking the things which we lack, the holy spirit of love to fill our hearts; and if we seek it we shall find it. We are to knock upon the Lord's storehouse of grace and blessing by continued efforts, as well as praying without ceasing, and as a result it will surely be opened to us. The asking, the seeking, the knocking, will all imply faith in the Lord, which will be pleasing in His sight, and it will also imply faithfulness on our part and a desire to be conformed fully to the Lord's will. And these good desires of our heart shall be gratified because, as an earthly parent would respond to his child's request for earthly food, so will the Lord respond and supply grace in every time of need to His children. He will not deceive us, nor give us evil things when we desire the good, but will do for us exceedingly abundantly more than we could ask or think; for is not our heavenly Father much better than any imperfect human father could possibly be?

“Luke's reference to this discourse (Luke 11:13) declares that the good thing that God will be pleased to give these asking, seeking, knocking ones, is His holy spirit. And this is exactly what is needed *as an* offset to the unholy, unloving, selfish, judging and fault-finding spirit of the flesh which must be cast out. The antidote for the poison is that we should be filled with the holy spirit, the spirit of love, for ‘love worketh no ill to his neighbour.’ Love ‘suffereth long and is kind’ ; love ‘is not puffed up’ to see the faults of others and to be blind to its own; it ‘vaunteth not itself’ to be a general critic, fault-finder and ‘accuser of the brethren.’ Love is sympathetic, helpful, the spirit of God. (1 Car. 13:4; Ram. 13:10.)

“ ‘Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.’ The word ‘therefore’ shows the connection between this and the preceding features of the lesson; it signifies that this will be a test or rule by which we may discern when and to what extent we are misjudging the motives of others, and officially endeavouring to perform the very delicate operation of removing their splinters. This verse is therefore known as the ‘Golden Rule’ — the rule which God would have His people use in respect of all the affairs of life—especially in their relationship and dealings with the ‘brethren.’ When disposed to find a fault, or pick a flaw, when disposed to condemn another or to criticise another's faults, or to hold him up to odium, we can generally know of the propriety or impropriety of so doing or thinking, by asking ourselves the question, Would I wish another to do, to say or to think this respecting me, if I were he and he were I?”

Jesus said,—”This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath

no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:12,13.) “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him.” (John 14:21.) Again, — “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

We note also that our Lord always sought to encourage and instil into the hearts of His disciples the quality of faith—confidence in the power and goodness of God. We must come to God confidently in the name of Jesus, trusting in the merit of His precious blood; we must come believing fully in God’s mercy and in His willingness to help us.

One of these records is found in Mark 11:22-24, — Jesus said, “Have faith in God.”

There is another lesson on faith found in Mark 9. Our Lord and three of His disciples had just come from the Mount of Transfiguration, when the incident recorded in this chapter came to His notice. (See Mark 9:14-24.) We note in these verses the inability of the disciples to cast out the evil spirit (verse 18); then our Lord’s inquiry as to the length of time of the affliction (verse 21); then the pathetic plea of the father of the child—“but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.” Jesus’ reply is full of meaning to, all His disciples, and we do well to keep it always in mind—“If *thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.*” Then, referring to Matt. 17:19,21, concerning the same incident, the disciples came later to Jesus and said,—“Why could not we cast him out?” and Jesus said unto them, “Because of your unbelief; for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”

Also there is another of Jesus’ “sayings” that we do well to keep in mind, recorded in Mark. 5:36. In the context the verses 22-36 are very interesting and instructive. Jairus, one of the-rulers of the synagogue, appeals earnestly to our Lord that He would come and heal his little daughter who was lying at the point of death. On the way to the home of Jairus a messenger comes with the sad news that the girl had died. “Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master any further?” “As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, *Be not afraid, only believe.*” What a lovely reassuring “word” is this; it is one of those brief “sayings” of Jesus which we may all accept with thankfulness, and derive much help and comfort as we allow the thought to enter into our hearts, especially in moments of trial and perplexity.

Let us treasure up these “sayings” of the Master, and call them to mind frequently—“Be not afraid, only believe.” Let us believe and keep on believing.

“I believed in God’s wonderful mercy and grace,
Believed in the smile of His reconciled face,
Believed in His message of pardon and peace;
I believed, and I keep on believing.”

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Convention News.

THE Annual Convention arranged by the Melbourne Class and held over the Christmas period proved to be another season of spiritual refreshing, for which we are very grateful to our Heavenly Father. It was a pleasure to welcome visiting brethren from Adelaide, Sydney, Canberra, Tasmania, and country parts of Victoria, and the contributions of these dear friends added much to the benefits of the gatherings.

Three Bible studies were conducted during the Convention, on the Scriptural passages-1 Cor. 15:48-58; Rev. 2:1-7 and 1 Cor. 13:8-13. These studies provided helpful exchange of thoughts on the doctrinal, devotional and “pre-gent truth” portions of God’s Word, and were very profitable for all present. The passage in 1 Cor. 15 is dealt with helpfully and at some length in the article—”The Resurrection Victory”—in this issue, while the verses in 1 Cor. 13 are covered in the December “Peoples Paper” by the article, “Jesus Christ the Same Yesterday, Today and Forever,” further copies of which are available. Also all three studies are dealt with briefly in the Convention Notes which are now ready for all friends desiring these.

Addresses by the brethren were much appreciated, and covered a wide range of subjects, as follows :—
”The Suffering Way”; “God’s Inheritance”; “Little Children” • “The Wisdom, Justice, Love and Power of God”; “Whatsoever He Sayeth Unto You Do It”; “Justification Always Necessary”; “The Christian Faith”; “Christ’s Sacrifice”; “Heavenly Light in Colors”; “Clouds and Rainbows”; “In Expectation”; “Call to Remembrance—After Ye Were Illuminated”- “Time”; and “The Blessedness of Hearing and Seeing.”

Fellowship Meetings were also enjoyed, at which messages were received from various Classes of brethren, as well as from individual members throughout Australia, also from U.S.A., and Europe, all of which were warmly appreciated, indicating the fellowship of spirit existing amongst the Lord’s people. Praise and Testimony to the Lord’s loving care and over-ruling providence over the year past was also expressed by a number of the friends at these sessions. The “Hymns of Love” session also proved refreshing for all present, including a goodly number of children who had the opportunity of selecting hymns from their own hymn book. The Convention message, with warm Christian love and Greetings to all our brethren in every place, is found in the words of Heb. 10:32, 35, 36.

The four-day gatherings came to a fitting close with the usual Love Feast, during which all present shook hands with each other, while partaking of the token of cake and singing “Blest Be the Tie That Binds.” The hymn. “God Be With You” and a closing prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord and asking His blessing and guidance upon all His children everywhere, concluded another profitable season of refreshing, by the Lord’s favor.

Convention Review.

THE smooth running of the various sessions listed on Convention programmes adds much to the benefits received by all in attendance at such gatherings. Coming together in the Lord's name and spirit is essential for receiving spiritual blessings from the Giver of every good and perfect gift. To attain this happy outcome an amount of careful preparation is required by all assembling at Conventions.

Perhaps one of the most important preparations for gaining the full benefit from Convention gatherings (or all meetings for that matter) is to arrange the time element; that is, to be present at the meeting place well before the time of commencing, so that greetings to visiting and local brethren can be completed, and all seated and quiet, with the mind lifted up to the Lord, well before the exact time to start.

The time element is also very important in the preparation of addresses by the brethren; noting the time allotted on the programme is a guide to the amount of matter that should be prepared. Brethren coming with more that can be helpfully presented in the time allotted really take away from the benefits they are so desirous of imparting.

One speaker at the recent Convention was so earnest about his subject that he took 50% more time than allotted, to complete his thoughts. However, most of our brethren adhered well to their allotted times for addresses, realising it is a mark of Christian development not to encroach on another speaker's time, nor on the assembly.

Sydney Meetings.

The Sydney friends wish to advise that fortnightly Sunday afternoon meetings are held in the home of Brother Davis at West Ryde. All interested in the study of the Divine Plan of the Ages in the Sydney area are invited to contact Mr. A. Davis, 53 Bennett Street, West Ryde, for further information.

The Resurrection Victory.

ALL earnest Christians are surely grateful to the Lord that He caused His servant Paul to write that very helpful and enlightening chapter 15 of 1st Corinthians. In verses 3 and 4 Paul states the foundation doctrines of the Christian faith, and reminds his readers in verses 1 and 2 of the importance of holding fast to the saving truths of the gospel—"that Christ died for our sins . . . and that He rose again the third day, according to the scriptures."

Some at Corinth were evidently denying the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead (verse 12) ; but the Apostle shows the vital importance of the truth of this doctrine. Because Christ has been raised there will also be a resurrection of the dead, (See vs. 13-33)—the one hinges upon the other. "As by man (Adam) came death, by man (Jesus) came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (v. 21, 22.)

In verses 35-37 the Apostle answers the question,—”How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?” He states that the same difficulties which surround the resurrection, exist in the simple and every-day occurrence of the sowing and growth of seed. The objection of some was that the body died and returned to dust, and could not, therefore, rise again. The Apostle’s reply is that the same objection may be made in regard to grain that is sown; that dies also. The main portion of the grain decays that it may become food to the tender germ which springs from it, and the grain that is sown is not the same grain that is harvested. There will be the development of new grains, raised from that which is sown—of the same kind, but not composed of the same atoms. So in the resurrection. The Apostle seems to use this illustration to show that belief in the resurrection of the dead is not an unreasonable thing. (v. 38.)

While men cannot fully understand the growth, development, and reproduction of the various plants, grains and, seeds, etc., yet it is evident that God has established laws which govern these matters. (See Gen. 1:11, 12.) The whole arrangement of this matter is of God, and is beyond men’s comprehension. There is beautiful order in all of God’s works. The principles which operate in regard to the growth and development of the grains, etc., may also be applied to the matter of the resurrection of the dead. There will be order and harmony in connection with that wonderful work. Each shall have a body suited to him. Verse 39 shows there are many different forms of life, first of all human beings, then beasts, fishes and birds, all possessing life, yet under different circumstances and conditions, and different bodies. Verse 40 points out that there are also celestial or heavenly bodies (angels, cherubim, seraphim, various orders of spiritual beings), as well as the earthly ones, but each has its own particular glory (splendour or beauty).

Verse 41. Then, again, there are various degrees of glory in the celestial bodies; the sun has a glory or splendour of its own; the moon is also glorious though different to that of the sun; the stars are of a different glory again, and one star differeth from another star in glory. This shows the breadth and scope of the Creator’s power—the variety of His handiwork. God, as the Author of nature’s laws and Creator of all things in heaven and in earth, is not bound to give the same kind of body to every one of the human family in the resurrection. If He chooses to do so, God may bestow a higher reward upon some than upon others. (See Rom. 9:21.) Other Scriptures show clearly that the gospel Church, called to the high or heavenly calling in Christ, is to inherit the divine nature, the highest form of life. (2 Pet. 1:4.) The following verses explain this more fully. It would, seem that even among those who receive the reward of immortality — the divine nature — some will occupy more honorable positions than others. The twelve Apostles have their names written in the twelve foundations of the heavenly city. (Rev. 21:14.)

Verse 43. The New Creature is the “it” referred to here. We have the treasure of the New Mind in an earthen vessel. The members of Christ’s body in the flesh go down into death surrounded by the

weakness and imperfection which we have inherited through the fall, but how wonderful is the hope of the church that in the resurrection we shall be like our Lord, with perfect bodies, and able to serve God, perfectly. The present weaknesses of the flesh will all be eradicated. We shall be raised in incorruption, in power and glory. (1 John 3:2; Phil. 3:21.)

Verse 44 shows the change of nature which takes place in regard to the church of this Gospel Age. While they go down into death with the natural or earthly body, they are raised with the spiritual body suitable for the New Mind.

In verse 45 the Scripture statement is not that God gave to man a living soul, but that “he became a living soul.” (See Gen. 2:7.) The last Adam was made a quickening (life-giving) spirit. (John 5:21; 6:40.) The life we receive from Adam is a dying, forfeited life, but the life we receive through faith in Christ and full consecration to do the will of God is a newly-begotten spiritual life.

Verses 46, 47 clearly state that the first man was a natural or earthly being, “the second Adam is the Lord from heaven,”—a spiritual being. This would refer to our Lord at His second advent.

In verse 48 the Apostle shows there is a difference between the resurrection reward of the church, and that of the world of mankind. As the first Adam was of the earthly nature, so also those who are earthly will be of the human nature. The world of mankind in general will be brought back to human conditions, while the church who have responded to the call to sacrifice their justified human nature to be dead with Christ, and being begotten of the spirit during this Gospel Age, will have the reward of the heavenly nature in the resurrection. (1 John 3:2; 2 Pet. 1:4.)

It is true (verse 49) “we” (the church) in the present life have borne the image of the earthy (the first Adam), having the earthly nature, but the overcomers of this Gospel Age will have a spiritual reward; they will be with Christ and see Him as He is, and share His nature and glory. (1 John 3:1-3; Phil. 3:20, 21; 2 Cor. 5:2.) They receive the begetting of the spirit at the time of their full consecration to be dead with Christ, and if faithful unto death, they will receive the crown of life—the immortal, heavenly nature. (Rev. 2:10; 3:21.)

In verse 50 and following verses the Apostle further explains the great change of nature which takes place in regard to the church. He explains that flesh and blood (human nature) cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither do they inherit incorruption. The word “corruption” means that which may perish or decay. The word “incorruption” means that which is incapable of decay; that which is imperishable. The inheritance to which the church is called is an incorruptible inheritance; it cannot decay. (1 Pet. 1:4.)

In verses 51, 52 the Apostle describes a mystery (secret) connected with the change of the last members of the Body of Christ. He *says* — “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” The “last trump” mentioned here would seem to refer to the seventh trump of Rev. 11:15; it is the last of a series of seven symbolic trumpets.

In 1 Thes. 4:16 the Apostle refers to this same trump, calling it “the trump of God.” Its sounding heralds the second presence of our Lord, and marks the time for the resurrection of the sleeping saints — “the dead in Christ shall rise first.” “The dead (in Christ) shall be raised incorruptible,” and as the members of Christ’s body still in the flesh (the “we” class) finish their course in death, there is no longer the necessity for their remaining in the sleep of death; they pass immediately to their reward to be with Christ. This is also in harmony with the statement of the revelator in Rev. 14:13, 14, — “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth (the time of Christ’s second presence as shown by verse-14), that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.” In the symbolism here our Lord is pictured as the

Chief Reaper of the harvest of the Gospel Age; it implies His second presence.

Verse 53 describes the change of nature and being which takes place in regard to the church. “This corruptible (frail earthly being) must put on incorruption (a character and being that is permanent and cannot decay), and this mortal (dying nature) must put on immortality,”—the death-proof, divine nature.

An interesting article in one of the journals that comes from overseas distinguishes helpfully between the words “incorruption” and “immortality.” We quote:—“Athanasia (immortality) in each of the three passages in which it occurs (namely, 1 Cor. 15:53, 54 and 1 Tim. 6:15), refers to sentient beings, whereas this is not always the case with Aphtharsia (incorruption). Athanasia not only refers only to sentient beings, but in each instance refers to the life principle by which their organisms are animated.

“Aphtharsia, on the contrary, in those instances in which it is applied to sentient beings, does not refer to the life principle, but to either their organisms or characters. Aphtharsia, while sometimes referring to sentient beings, does not always do so, but in several instances refers to inanimate things, such as the Christian’s crown (1 Cor. 9:25), his inheritance (1 Pet. 1:4), the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3:4), and the quality of love possessed by believers still in the flesh (Eph. 6:24), etc.”

The word rendered “immortality” means “deathlessness,” and is applied only to intelligent beings, and refers to the quality of the principle of life which animates them rather than to their organism. Immortality or inherent life is possessed only by Jehovah and Christ, and is to be the reward of the overcoming church, so that they will be both immortal and incorruptible; while all who attain a character in harmony with God, whether on the angelic or human plane of life, may be said to have obtained a condition of incorruption, but not of immortality, which, as before stated, refers only to God and Christ and the joint-heirs of Christ—His Church.

Verse 54. “When this corruptible (this human organism compassed with infirmity) shall have put on incorruption (an organism holy, perfect, pure and incapable of decay), and this mortal (this life principle which is one that is sustained) shall have put on immortality (a life principle that has inherent life—the divine nature), then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” This victory over death refers especially to the first resurrection, but when the full deliverance and glorification of the church is accomplished, then the complete destruction of all the effects of sin and death will quickly follow during the 1,000 years of Christ’s Kingdom. Christ and His glorified church will be instrumental in wiping away all the effects of the curse of sin and death from all mankind. (Rom. 8:19,21; Rev. 21:4.)

Verse 55. “O death, where is thy sting? O grave (hades) where is thy victory?” This verse is an exclamation of triumph. All who appreciate the magnitude of the work accomplished by Christ can enter into the sentiment of the Apostle’s expression. (See Hosea 13:14.)

Verse 56. “The sting of death is sin.” Death is here personified as a venomous monster using sin as a sting with which to inflict torture. Sin is the cause of death. (Rom. 5:12.) When sin is all taken away, then death will be robbed of its power. Christ will fully accomplish this great work. (1 John 3:8.) “The strength of sin is the law.” The law of God reveals sin in its truly horrible light. The law intensifies the power of sin without giving strength to overcome it. (Rom. 7:7-13; 8: ‘2-4.)

Verse 57. “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We can indeed join with the Apostle in his description of praise and thanks to God for the victory and deliverance He has wrought for us through Christ.

Verse 58. “Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast.” In view of the great deliverance which has

been provided for us in Christ, and the glorious hope of the resurrection. (2 Pet. 3:14; 1 Pet. 5:10.) “Unmovable.” We should allow nothing to turn us aside from the hope of our heavenly calling. (Heb. 3:14; 13:9; Col. 1:23; Phil. 1:27,28.) “Always abounding in the work of the Lord.” (See Gal. 6:9,10.) “Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” (See Heb. 6:10,11.)

The Apostle turns back the line of his argument from the future time, when men will be actually lifted up out of sin and death and imperfection, to the present time in which this is reckonedly accomplished for the church, the body of Christ, through faith. His words are —”But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Although we see as yet ‘none of these things accomplished; although we have not our spiritual bodies, incorruptible and powerful; although we still have the treasure of the new mind in the earthen vessel; although we see nothing of the kingdom’s establishment, nevertheless, God giveth us the victory through Christ, by faith, so that even now we can “rejoice with joy unspeakable.” We can so confidently look forward, into the future as to claim a share in the victory over sin and death and the grave, through Him who loved us and bought us.

The closing argument is that on this account —because we see these things so clearly with the eye of faith—we should be “stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord,”—realising that it is God who is working out this great plan of salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ and supporting all those who are seeking to walk in His steps to come off conquerors through Him. Death and the grave may seem to be gaining the victory over us, but faith sees the matter from the other side, from the standpoint of accomplished victory in the future. Thus, even now faith exults and rejoices in the privilege of co-laboring with the Redeemer, and realises that time and energy and life so spent, are spent “not in vain,” because we confidently hope for, expect and wait for the glorious first resurrection “change” and the glorious privileges of association with our Master in His kingdom and work.

“Peoples Paper” Bi-Monthly.

It has been decided to publish the “Peoples Paper” bi-monthly, but it is expected that some little extras will be included with each issue of the “Paper”. With this February-March issue is included a copy of the poem “The True Church” and the advertising slip—”Do You Know?” Friends who can use supplies of either of these items are invited to apply for same, the “Do You Know” slips being available in quantities.

Adelaide Easter Convention.

The Adelaide brethren wish to advise that their Easter Convention is to be held this year (D.V.) from Good Friday to Easter Monday, April 20th to 23rd, in Alfred Masonic Hall, 68 Waymouth Street, Adelaide, and they extend an invitation to all friends able to attend the gatherings. Further particulars from the secretary, Mrs. H. Bartel, 10 Winston Ave., Clarence Gardens, Edwardstown, S.A.

Passover Memorial, 1962

The anniversary of the Memorial of Christ’s death falls this year on the evening of Tuesday, 17th April It is for the brethren to arrange their observance in accord with the spirit of the occasion, and in response to our Lord’s request— ”This do in remembrance of me.”

Memorial Services.

Melbourne—Tuesday, 17th April, at 7.30 p.m., at Church of Christ, 610 Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn. (Not far from Glenferrie Station; a few doors south of Burwood Road.)