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The Dawn

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Highlights of Dawn

Evidences of the Changing Order

THROUGHOUT the Gospel Age the Lord's people have looked with longing hearts for the time when they would be gathered home to be with their Lord Jesus, with God's kingdom established in the earth—that wonderful time foretold by all God's holy prophets, when righteousness would reign over the whole world, and God would wipe away all tears, and there should be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for all these distressing conditions will have passed away.—Rev. 21:1-5

Even before Jesus had finished his earthly ministry the disciples questioned him along this line, asking him, "What shall be the sign of thy presence, and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3) They had apparently come to understand that before their glorious hope could be realized Jesus, for some reason, must go away, and then return to establish his kingdom in the earth. One of the significant statements Jesus made at that time in reply to their question was that "then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." —Matt. 24:21

The Brightness of His Presence

This hope of being with their Lord in his kingdom was associated by the brethren of the Early Church with his return; and they yearned the more for that event, as suffering for the faith was often their lot in those trying days. Thus we find the Apostle Paul writing words of encouragement to the brethren at Thessalonica, who were being persecuted, telling them that they and he would indeed be granted a rest when the Lord Jesus would come to be glorified in his saints, and "be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (II Thess. 1:7, 8) But under divine inspiration he cautions them to patience and long-suffering, pointing out that before that day should come, certain events must take place. He explained that there must first come a falling away, and "that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition [the Antichrist, that counterfeit system made up of a false lord and an apostate church, and styled Christendom], . . . whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his presence."—II Thess. 2:3, 8

The Renewed Search for Truth

No doubt because it was the due time in God's purpose for it to happen, there came about in the latter portion of the Gospel Age a remarkable and widespread investigation of Bible teachings, especially as these relate to prophetic truths. This broadened inquiry had its small buddings in the 16th century, with the Reformation, but it came to full flower in the 18th and 19th centuries. Numerous scholars in all parts of the world began delving more deeply into the Scriptures, stimulated by a reawakened interest in the prophecies concerning the Lord's second presence, the end of the age, and the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

During the 19th century especially, numerous studies were published which set forth the findings of these seekers after truth, many of them exposing long-held beliefs concerning the immortality of the soul, hell, the trinity, and the mass, as error. One of these earnest Bible scholars was our Brother Charles Taze Russell, through whose ministry the Lord's people have been so richly blessed with a simple and yet scripturally harmonious exposition of the fundamental truths of God's Word, and of God's loving plans and purposes for all mankind.

Down through the long years of the Gospel Age, we cannot know how many of our brethren in the Lord suffered persecution and death at the instigation of that false system described by Paul, as they yearned for and prayed for the Lord's return, for the purpose of setting up his true and righteous kingdom. But we do know from the Scriptures, and from what is occurring in the world about us, that we are now living in a time when the foretold destruction of that system is near at hand. The mists of ignorance are being dissipated by the present-day enlightenment enjoyed by the masses; the chains of superstition are being broken by the inexorable power of understanding that comes from increased education of the people; and thus the ages-long hold of the ecclesiastical systems on the people is being shaken. Church shepherds are abandoning their flocks, the sheep themselves are becoming less sheepish, boldly questioning and in some cases even disregarding the instructions of their leaders; while some religious institutions confess to financial difficulties, which of course indicates a slackening of support by their constituencies. Thus we see that the ecclesiastical element of the present social structure is weakening; and we must conclude that it is being destroyed, even as Paul foretold, by "the brightness of his presence."

Civilization—Blessings and Evils

From the beginning of his existence right up till the latter centuries, man's life here on earth went along century after century without substantial change. For the vast majority it was a simple, rural existence; a matter of cultivating a bit of ground, caring for a cow, some chickens or perhaps a few pigs. Of course there were the ever-recurring periods of wars, famines, floods, and the plague. But by and large, as life had been for the father, so it was for the son, with little variation, for generation after generation. The so-called advance of civilization was barely discernible.

With the arrival of the 18th century, due no doubt to the Lord's overruling providences, and in accordance with the divine schedule, social and economic change came much more rapidly. Ingenious mechanical inventions suddenly appeared on the scene, encouraging the introduction of the factory system of production of goods, causing inroads on the livelihood of the individual home or small-shop craftsman, and starting the far-reaching social changes attendant upon the trend of the population away from the rural life to the city existence. The working man then became largely dependent for his existence on the long, hard hours put in at the factory; and when the factory was slack, or closed down, he and his family often went hungry and otherwise suffered. He no longer had his small vegetable garden of corn and potatoes, his chickens, to fall back on in time of difficulty.

This unhappy situation might have continued indefinitely except for two things: the latent strength that is implicit in numbers, and the growing awareness of that strength that has come from education and communication as a result of the "brightshining" of our Lord's presence. Thus, out of much travail, was born the labor union, providing a collective and powerful voice for the laboring man

which, regrettably, has not at all times been used wisely, temperately, and unselfishly. And the stage was set for decades of bruising warfare between capital and labor, which has continued to this day.

Armageddon, and Its Many Elements

The ensuing conflict between these two elements of society (capital and labor) was long regarded by many as being the principal, if not the only, source of trouble between men that would eventually explode into the world's Armageddon. (Zeph. 1:7-9) Considering the pervading selfishness that unfortunately besets all segments of the human race, rich and poor, high and low, there can be little doubt that the continuing contest between labor and capital will indeed play a large part in that destructive period of time spoken of in the Scriptures as the Day of Jehovah.

But today we see that there are many other factors in addition to the capital-labor struggle that will also be involved in that necessary destruction of this present evil world order; factors which were not apparent as recently as a half century ago. Daily, and almost hourly, we are reminded of the perils of continued pollution of the air, the earth, and the waters of this very small (and only) planet on which we live; of the constant, horrifying threat of nuclear annihilation of the civilized world (tenuous international agreements notwithstanding); of the unbridled expansion of the use of drugs of all kinds, which threatens to overwhelm so many of our young people, dooming them to lives of slavery to a hunger that often can be sated only with money gained by violence or murder; of the universal population explosion with its seemingly insoluble problems of hunger, vile housing, vice, and corruption.

These are areas of trouble which did not exist prior to the last fifty years or so; they are the factors that make the present a time of trouble "the like of which has not

occurred from the beginning of the world down to the present time—no, nor ever will again.” (Matt. 24:21, TCNT) Implacably and inevitably they are driving the present evil world to the brink of the foretold Armageddon. We are all very much aware of these, for they inescapably confront every one of us every day and at every turn.

A Root of Evil

But there is another area of our civilization that is also showing signs of ill health, and about which we do not hear quite so much discussion as we do about the other ills, possibly because it is less easily understood. However, most of us, and especially our shopping wives, are daily aware of the symptoms of the disease, although most do not discern the basic cause. The symptoms, in this case, are the high and rising prices that everything costs us; the disease itself is inflation of our money supply.

Simply put, we are, as a nation, spending more than we are taking in. To meet the short-fall our federal government “borrows” from the commercial banks by selling them government securities for which the banks pay, in substantial measure, by crediting the checking account of the federal government. This increases the amount of money that is seeking to purchase the materials and services available in the market at a given time, thus exerting upward pressure on the price structure. In short, the purchasing power of money declines.

Part of the budgetary deficit is due to the great sums of money being spent to fight the war in Vietnam. Part is related to the maintenance of armed forces in other parts of the world. It is also due to the foreign aid program supported by this nation under which financial, technical, and material assistance is given to underdeveloped nations. As a result, we are spending many billions of dollars abroad which are piling up, and which exist as a potentially troublesome demand on our financial reserves.

Eat, Drink, and Be Merry?

But our financial troubles are not altogether tied to our foreign operations. Here at home, the expense side of the national budget seems almost literally out-of-hand because of costly, built-in programs which go on and on, seemingly beyond control; demands by the states for a larger share of the revenues collected by the central government, rising costs of equipment for national defense, higher welfare and social security payments, a rising payroll for the ever-growing army of civilian workers employed by the government, more money for education and health, and so on, ad infinitum. Annual deficits in the national budget of a size that formerly would have shocked the people and the Congress into alarmed action are now accepted with a minimum of objection.

True, a concerned economist here, or a serious-minded politician there, occasionally raises his voice in feeble protest, to no avail. The fact is, almost everyone likes inflation; for a greater or lesser period of time it induces higher wages, higher stock prices, higher inventory valuations, rising values on real estate and commodities, higher profits for manufacturers, middle men and retailers, higher everything. All of this produces a deluding euphoria. What if taxes and the cost of meat, shoes, and automobiles do rise? Another round of strikes followed by another round of wage increases will correct that! Such goes the siren song of inflation.

The fallacy in all this is that the effects of inflation are never felt equally by all; while many do benefit, many others suffer; and the resulting imbalances eventually cause difficult problems, suffering, and distress, falling usually on those least able to cope with them. And the ominous lesson that history teaches is that inflation, if and when it gets out of hand, can bring dislocations that all too often end in general economic depression, with financial disaster and suffering to all.

We do not wish to be misunderstood. We do not say that these evil results are imminent, or inevitable. We will merely wait and watch, to see what, in the Lord's providences, the future brings. We would say, however, that we in this nation have for some time now been seeing the disturbing impact of inflationary forces on our own communities and on our own lives. We see it in the steadily rising prices for everything we buy. We see it in rising income taxes, real estate taxes, and sales taxes. We see it in the mounting costs of keeping the poor and unemployed from going hungry or cold, or getting restive. We see it in the need for city governments to reduce the number of police and firemen on their payrolls at the very time when crime and arson are rising. We see it in curtailed garbage collections, reduced school budgets, the closing down of hospitals, parks, playgrounds, museums, and libraries. And we see it in the frantic efforts of big city governments all over the nation to balance, by whatever means, their untidy budgets. There are, surely, many more dollars around—but somehow they do not seem to be working nearly as hard as they used to!

In the Kingdom—Money Outmoded!

As we noted earlier, in his reply to the disciples' question, Jesus said there would be a time of trouble such as there has not been since there was a nation. This time of trouble is elsewhere spoken of in the Scriptures as the day of the Lord [Jehovah]; the day of [God's] vengeance; the day of wrath. It is a day which betokens the passing of the present evil order, to be replaced by a new and better one. One of these prophecies is given to us by Zephaniah: "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty men shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a

day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath: but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land."—Zeph. 1:14-18

Speaking of this same time, the Prophet Ezekiel says, "They shall also gird themselves with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them; and shame shall be upon all faces, and baldness upon their heads. They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels: because it is the stumbling block of their iniquity."—Ezek. 7:17-19

These statements by God's holy prophets indicate that in the final great trouble to come upon the world in the day of Jehovah, one's gold and silver, one's money, will have no value. But when the day of Jehovah has done its work, this present evil world will have passed away, and the Lord's righteous kingdom will be established in the earth. All mankind will be raised from their graves, and brought to a knowledge of the truth. "And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them." And all the obedient of mankind shall enjoy everlasting life here on earth. What a glorious prospect!—John 5:25; I Tim. 2:3, 4; Isa. 65:21; Rev. 22:17

The BIBLE ANSWERS

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WYOMING

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Port Aux Basques, Nfld.
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Stephenville, Nfld.
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St. Thomas, Ont.
CHLO 1570 10:45 a.m.
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PANAMA

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RADIO TOPICS FOR AUGUST

6—"A World Transition" 20—"The Judgment Day"
13—"Christ the Foundation" 27—"The Kingdoms of this World"

Bible Study

LESSON FOR AUGUST 6

Worshiping in the Congregation

MEMORY VERSE: "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."—Psalm 34:3

PSALM 122

PSALM 122 was one used by pilgrims as they made their way up to Jerusalem, therefore the title, "A Song of Ascents." The first verse reads, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." The psalmist was glad to accept an invitation to join the pilgrim group. It was necessary to make these long pilgrimages in groups for protection against robbers and for coping with other difficulties which might arise.

The temple in Jerusalem was the center of worship for the Israelites. Early in the Christian era the followers of Jesus began to erect meeting places, and slowly these took on a much more important place in their minds than circumstances warranted. The "churches," as they were called, grew in splendor, and then came the cathedral.

But these were not the church. The word "church" in the New Testament is a translation of the Greek word *ek-klesia*, meaning a "calling out," or a called-out or elected people. It is the congregation of God's people, then, that constitutes the real church, not the building in which they meet.

In the very early part of the age the disciples frequently met in one another's homes. They believed Jesus' promise that wherever two or three meet in his name he would be in their midst. As they grew in numbers the homes of the brethren in many instances would be too small for meeting purposes. Then came the "meeting house." Today among many church people there seems to be a returning to the custom of meeting in homes, especially by those who are becoming disillusioned with "the establishment."

In his sermon on Mars' hill the Apostle Paul said, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands." (Acts 17:24) God dwells in the hearts of his fully dedicated people. They as individuals are the temple of God. (I Cor. 3:16) These are now being prepared to be a greater temple which will serve in the next age as the meeting place between God and man. Paul wrote, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord."—Eph. 2:19-22

HEBREWS 10:23-25

We suggest the use of the reading given this 23rd verse in the Revised Standard Version: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful." The King James Version reads, "profession of faith," instead of "confession of hope." The main difference is the use of the word "hope" which is the proper translation of the Greek word here used, instead of "faith."

"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." (vss. 24, 25) Here the "provoking," or urging, to love and good works is clearly associated with the assembling of ourselves together. And this is logical! How can we be an encouragement to our brethren, and how can they encourage us, if we hold ourselves aloof from one another! "As the manner of some is." It is clear that the zealous ones in the Early Church did have the custom of meeting together for mutual instruction and encouragement. But some among the "Hebrews" had seemingly become lax in this connection, and the apostle is urging them not to forsake this privilege, for all the Lord's people need the spiritual help they can obtain by associating with others of like precious faith.

QUESTIONS

What constitutes the church of Christ?

Quote Paul's reference to a holy temple in the Lord, and explain it.

Worshiping in the Family

MEMORY VERSE: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."—Joshua 24:15

DEUTERONOMY 6:1-9

IT IS the privilege and responsibility of all parents who are dedicated followers of the Master to instruct their children in a knowledge of the Lord and of his Word. Granting that Sunday schools are a help in the instruction of children along religious lines, they should not be depended upon to take the place of home instruction.

We are today living in a time when there is a general breakdown of religious instruction in the home, and without doubt this accounts to a considerable extent for the gradually lowering moral standards of the young generation, and the drift toward the use of drugs and other evils which plague society in this chaotic time in which we are living.

This first section of our lesson is a message by Moses to the children of Israel, not too long before he died. He knew that the time was near when they would be crossing over Jordan into the Promised Land

and that he would not be going with them.

In this message Moses presents a brief summary of what the Law should mean to the people in their relationship to God: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (vs. 5) As far as relationship among themselves was concerned, they were to love their neighbor as themselves.—Lev. 19:18

Jesus quoted these two summaries of the Law in one of his encounters with those who were endeavoring to trap him. He was asked which was the greatest commandment, and his reply was this summary of the Law given by Moses in which he so clearly and effectively sets forth the Law's demand so far as our worship of God is concerned, and also our duty toward one another: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."—Matt. 22:40

Important in Moses' message is the statement, "These words,

which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart." If the Word of the Lord is not in the hearts of his people it is of little value to them. True, Moses added to this, "Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." These outward displays would be a reminder to them of their covenant with the Lord.

We would probably be safe in saying that at no time did the whole nation of Israel observe these final instructions of their lawgiver Moses. But it is also true that in every generation there was a remnant which did. Even in the days of Elijah, when the land was overrun with the worship of Baal, the Lord told his prophet that there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Apparently, then, there were many homes in which the worship of the true God was maintained.

II TIMOTHY 1:3-7

This second letter to Timothy was written by Paul while in prison at Rome, waiting to be executed. He is thankful for the instructions in the Word of God which he had received from his forebears, and thankful also that Timothy, whom he looked upon as his son in the

faith, had also received similar instructions from his grandmother, and from his mother. He wrote, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."—vss. 5-7

In this epistle Paul invited Timothy to visit him in prison, and he realized that this could be a test of faith. Most of the brethren in the area had deserted Paul because of his situation, but he reminds Timothy that the Spirit of the Lord which he had received was not one of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. There is no doubt that Timothy responded to this invitation if the Roman authorities permitted him to do so.

QUESTIONS

Quote Moses' summary of the Law as it applies to our responsibility toward God, and toward one another.

What does it mean to have the spirit of love and of a sound mind?

Sharing in Christ's Work

MEMORY VERSE: "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."—John 14:21

JOHN 15:1-11

THE Parable of the Vine and the Branches is designed to show that the divine purpose through Jesus and his dedicated followers is that they bear "fruit." The parable teaches that this purpose is accomplished through the unity of Christ and his church: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."—vss. 1, 2

Again, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." These statements by Jesus show not only the unity that must exist between Jesus and his true followers, but also that fruitbearing must result from this unity.

The question naturally arises as to what this "fruit" is that is so important. There is, of

course, the fruit of the Spirit, which is described as love, joy, peace, etc. These elements of Christian character are indeed important, and those who abide in Christ, and in whom Christ abides, will surely possess this fruitage of Christian character in varying degrees; but no true Christian will be entirely barren of "the fruit of the Spirit."

It is well to remember that fruit does not grow to enrich itself, but is good for the needs of others. And when we think of this we naturally inquire as to what the Lord's design is for the present age—what is his work in the earth? He is selecting and preparing a people to be associated with Jesus in the promised blessing of all the families of the earth during the age to come.

All true followers of the Master are commissioned to go into all the world and preach the Gospel; and those who believe are to be encouraged to consecrate themselves to the Lord so that they might receive

of the Holy Spirit, and through the influence of the Spirit, be baptized into the body of Christ.

These become brethren in Christ, and it is the privilege of all brethren to lay down their lives for one another in helping them to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, and thus be prepared to reign with Christ in his future messianic kingdom. This labor of love is a fruitage which gives glory to God because it furthers the interest of his loving plan of redemption and salvation which he is carrying forward in the earth.

This work of glorifying the Lord can be accomplished only by those who are branches in the true "vine," which is Jesus. Jesus said, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." (vs. 4) How important it is that through a continued spirit of consecration and dedication we abide in the vine.

In the presentation of this vital truth concerning the vine and the branches, Jesus makes another important remark: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (vs. 7) Naturally those who abide in Jesus, and whose words abide in them, will ask in prayer only for

those things which they believe are in harmony with the Lord's will.

But there seems to be a little more than this implied by Jesus' remark, for he continues, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." (vs. 8) In the parable Jesus mentions that those who bear fruit are "purged," that they might bring forth more fruit. This might suggest trials and discipline, and the branches might well feel their need of the Lord's help in these times of trial, and this would be one of the things they would pray for.

In view of the context it would seem that Jesus was assuring his disciples that all their petitions relating to their position in the vine and to fruitbearing would receive favorable answers; for in this case their prayers would reveal their genuine interest in the Father's plan, and a desire above everything else to glorify God.

QUESTIONS

What are the basic teachings of Jesus' Parable of the Vine and the Branches?

How can we make sure that our prayers will be answered?

Sharing Through Witness

MEMORY VERSE: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."—Acts 4:20

ACTS 4:13-21

THIS lesson has a very enlightening background which unfolds, beginning with the previous chapter. The account is that Peter and John had healed a man who had been lame from the time of his birth, and after he was healed "all the people saw him walking and praising God." (Acts 3:9) Naturally the people were amazed at this great miracle.

When Peter saw this "he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" (Acts 3:12) The One who had actually performed this miracle was Jesus, whom the Heavenly Father had glorified, the One whom they had persecuted, and who had been put to death. Peter explained that his listeners had "killed the Prince of life" and that God had raised him from the dead."—Acts 3:13-15

Peter then explains that this resurrected Jesus who was responsible for the great miracle which they had witnessed, would come again, and that then there would be "times of restitution [restoration] of all things," reminding his listeners that this great boon had been spoken by the mouth of all God's holy prophets since the world began.—Acts 3:19-21

In the beginning of chapter 4 we learn that certain of the religious rulers were grieved over what had taken place, especially that Peter and John had taught the people "and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." They arrested Peter and John and kept them in prison overnight, and the next day brought them forth for trial.

Peter did not let an opportunity for witnessing pass, so he said to his judges, "If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto

you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole." (ch. 4:9,10) Peter added to this, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."—ch. 4:12

Here our lesson assignment picks up with a reference to the "boldness" of Peter and John, and the recognition that they had been with Jesus. The Greek word here translated "boldness" indicates "skill in speech." It will be remembered that it was said of Jesus that "never man spake like this man." (John 7:46) Jesus had a clear grasp of the issues he discussed and could present those issues in a straightforward manner; and now the persecutors of Peter and John recognized the same characteristic in them, and they marveled.

So what could these rulers do! Besides, the man who had been healed was standing with them, and they could not then say anything against these two faithful witnesses. Then they dismissed everyone from the hearing room, and in private discussion tried to reach some conclusion as to what they should do. They knew that large numbers throughout the Jerusalem area had already

heard of the wonderful miracle which had been performed, and were favorably impressed. They could not deny this, and they sensed that if they imprisoned such benefactors the situation would become even worse.

So they decided to let Peter and John go free, with a warning "that they speak henceforth to no man" in the name of Jesus. They called the two apostles back into the hearing room "and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus."

"But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." The rulers gave up reluctantly. While they issued further threats, there was nothing they could do but free their prisoners.

QUESTIONS

Outline the background of today's lesson.

Why were the religious rulers hindered against taking severe action against Peter and John?

What is the divine commission to the church?

Christian Life and Doctrine

The Sign in Heaven

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn."

—Matthew 24:30

FIVE days before Jesus was crucified he rode into the city of Jerusalem on an ass, and was hailed as king by a multitude of his followers, who shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." (Matt. 21:9) Following this triumphal entry into the city, King Jesus visited the temple and exercised kingly authority by driving out the money changers. Undoubtedly this was a time of high excitement for the disciples; for they would see in these experiences what appeared to be convincing evidence that the One whom they had accepted and followed in the belief that he had come to be king of Israel and of the world, was about to begin his reign. This conviction was of vital interest to them because he had promised that if they were faithful to him they would have the privilege of reigning with him.

Jesus remained in the temple that day, and taught the people many important truths concerning his kingdom. He forecast the downfall of Israel's polity and the casting off of the scribes and Pharisees as the mouthpieces of the Lord. While he had just been acclaimed king by many, he knew that the Israelites as a whole, misguided by their

hypocritical leaders, were opposed to him, and were plotting against his life. Knowing this, he quoted a prophecy of the Old Testament concerning a stone which the builders rejected, but which later became "the head of the corner." This "stone" was Jesus.—Matt. 21:42-44; Ps. 118:22

While the privilege of being associated with Jesus in the kingdom of the Lord was first offered to Israel, this nation had proved unworthy of the honor; so he prophesied that the kingdom would be taken from them and given to a nation "bringing forth the fruits thereof." "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate," he said, in a final word of condemnation, and added, "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."—Matt. 23:38, 39

Revealing words are these! Only a matter of hours before this, many had used this very expression in acclaiming Jesus as their king. While Jesus knew that this was a fulfilment of an Old Testament prophecy (Ps. 118:26), he knew also it did not mean that the nation as a whole had accepted him, hence this general acceptance must wait for a time still future. Now the nation was cast off from being the special channel of divine blessings to the world, and would go through much tribulation during the centuries to come. Finally, however, their eyes were to be opened to recognize Jesus as their Messiah and king, and then all Israel would join in, saying, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Without doubt the disciples heard this prophecy, even as they also heard the words of condemnation against the scribes and Pharisees, who, as Jesus said, were at that time sitting in Moses' seat. Upon leaving the temple following these hours of truth-revealing discussion, Jesus further prophesied that the temple itself would be destroyed—that there would not be one stone left upon another.—Matt. 24:2

When he rode triumphantly into the city as king and was acclaimed such by his friends, the disciples may have thought that his kingdom was about to be established, but now they would know differently. They would know that his real coming as king to Israel and to the world was future; that he was going away and would return and that not until then would the people as a whole join in the acclamation, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

While the thought of a further waiting for the kingdom may have been discouraging to the disciples, they were not stumbled by it. Instead they set about to find out, if they could, how long the waiting period would be, and how they would know when it was over. So we find them the next day holding a private interview with the Master. The record indicates that they asked him three leading questions: (1) When shall these things be? (2) What shall be the sign of thy coming? and (3) What shall be the sign "of the end of the world?"—Matt. 24:3

The first of these questions, relating to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, was not directly answered by Jesus. But Jesus did answer the two questions concerning the sign of his coming and the end of the world. To get the facts clearly before us, however, it is important to remember that in the Greek text the word **parousia** is used, and mistranslated "coming." It means "presence," not "coming." Similarly, it is necessary to a clear understanding of the text to know that the word translated "world" is **aion** and means "age," not this planet on which we live. What the disciples really asked was, "What shall be the sign of thy **presence** and of the end of the **age**?"

Why did the disciples ask what sign, or signs, would accompany the Master's second visit to earth? It was because only through the signs which accompanied his first visit and ministry had they been convinced that he was truly

the Messiah. There was no way of knowing what the Messiah, Israel's king, would look like, so the disciples, even as did John the Baptist, had to rely on signs. But now Jesus was going away, and there was mystery attached to his going. On one occasion he said to the Jews, "Whither I go, ye cannot come." (John 8:21) Vaguely his disciples may have realized that he was to be taken away from them through death. He had given them clear indications of this, explaining, "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world," and, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 6:51; 3:14; 12:32) To them, however, Jesus was the Messiah and King of Israel, and how could he exercise these offices of glory unless he remained alive? To them it was unthinkable that his enemies would be victorious and put him to death. So they were puzzled.

But despite the things concerning him which they did not understand at that time, there were other points which they did realize. He had just given a clear indication that a time was coming when the nation of Israel would acclaim him as king, as the One who had come in the name of the Lord. To them this meant that he would indeed be away from them for awhile; so they wanted to be sure that when he returned they would know of his presence, even as they had been so highly favored to know of his first presence—a presence which had been revealed by signs. So they asked, "What shall be the sign of thy presence, and of the end of the age?"

A few days after the disciples asked Jesus these questions, he stood before Pilate accused by his fellow Israelites of aspiring to be a king, which, if true, and as Pilate would view the matter, would make him guilty of treason against the Roman Empire. Jesus acknowledged that he was destined to be a king: "To this end was I born, and for

this cause came I into the world," he affirmed. He explained, however, that his kingdom was not of this world, or order [Greek, kosmos]. (John 18:36, 37) In other words, when the time would come for him to commence his reign, it would presage the beginning of a new order or age, so the disciples were quite right in associating the Master's return with the end of this present age. In reality, signs which would indicate the ending of one age preparatory to the beginning of another would also denote the presence of Christ; for, as we shall see from the Scriptures, it is his return that will bring the age of Satan's rule to an end.

Beginning with Pentecost, and as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of truth at that time, the true followers of the Master have understood more clearly what was involved in his going away and are therefore prepared to understand better the manner of his return and the characteristics of his second presence. In a previous study we learned that Jesus died to redeem the world from death, and that in the resurrection he was not restored to life as a man, but as a glorious spirit being of the highest order—even that of the divine nature.

Concerning God we read that he is "invisible." Here, then, is a most important reason we must depend upon signs to indicate the second presence of Christ. It is because, now, being like the Heavenly Father in nature, and no longer a man, he is "invisible" to human eyes. It is, then, an invisible King whose presence in the world to establish a kingdom is revealed by signs. In Jesus' answer to the disciples' question as to what would constitute the evidence of his presence, the Master not only told them what the signs would be, but also emphasized the necessity of watching faithfully for those signs so that they might know of his return. He explained that the time of his presence would be as a "thief in the night," hence, while present, he would be unknown to all except the faithful watch-

ers who detected the signs and were able to read them correctly.—Matt. 24:43; Rev. 3:3

When the disciples asked concerning the evidence of the Lord's return they used the Greek word **semeion**, which is the singular form of the word, and is properly translated by our word "sign," also in the singular. However, when Jesus answered their question he made it plain that there would be more than one sign. For example, Luke quotes part of Jesus' reply, saying, "And there shall be signs [plural] in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things coming upon the earth: for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."—Luke 21:25, 26

In addition to these signs Jesus mentions others, but for our present study we will confine ourselves to this list, as we believe that it is quite sufficient—when we note the marvelous manner in which they are being fulfilled—to establish the fact that we are even now living in the days of the presence of the Son of Man, earth's new King. While Luke quotes Jesus as mentioning signs which would appear in the "sun, and in the moon, and in the stars," Matthew's account of this same statement refers to it simply as a sign that would appear in heaven. The thought is the same, however, for the sun, moon, and stars constitute what we speak of as the "heavens."

Matthew's account tells us that when the sign of the Son of Man appears in heaven, "all the tribes of the earth mourn," while Luke's report states that accompanying the signs in the sun and the moon and the stars there would be "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity," and that there would be a roaring of the sea and of the waves. Luke explains that the distress of nations with perplexity is due to the fact that the "powers of heaven" are

shaken. The sign in the heavens, therefore, is the fact that their powers over the affairs of the earth are shaken, causing world-wide distress, and an almost universal fear of still greater tragedies to come.

What, then, is meant by the statement that "the powers of heaven shall be shaken"? The Apostle Peter was one who heard this great prophecy of the present time directly from the lips of the Master, and later he wrote an epistle concerning the time of the Lord's presence, and indicates that one of the evidences thereof would be the fact that "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (II Pet. 3: 10) For what Jesus described as a shaking of the powers of the heavens Peter explains as a passing away of the heavens, their elements melting with fervent heat. And what Jesus referred to as "distress of nations with perplexity," with the "sea and the waves roaring," Peter identifies as "the earth also and the works that are therein" being burned up.

All of this is, of course, symbolic language—the literal earth "abideth forever." (Eccl. 1:4) It is well to note in this connection that Peter speaks of a heavens and an earth that passed away at the time of the flood, but the literal sun, moon, and stars, and the literal earth remained as they were. The apostle speaks of the heavens and earth which were before the flood as making up the "world that then was." (II Pet. 3:5, 6) The Greek word here translated "world" is *kosmos*, meaning order, or arrangement. It was the order of things, the "civilization" that existed before the flood, that came to an end as a result of the Deluge; hence, by following through with this prophetic analogy we learn that it is the present social order, the present "civilization," that comes to an end as a result of Christ's return and presence as the King of the new world of tomorrow.

What, then, is symbolized by the "heavens" and the "earth" which pass away at the presence of the Lord? There are scriptures which give us a clue to the proper answer to this question. For example, Jesus, in speaking of some of the elements of the symbolic earth, said that there would be a roaring of "the sea and the waves." Turning to Isaiah 17:12, 13, we read, "Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters."

Comparing this with Jesus' statement concerning the "distress of nations with perplexity," it becomes obvious that his reference to the roaring of the sea and the waves was his way of illustrating the international distress which would result from the presence of the Lord. This language, translated into present-day usage and experience, is graphically descriptive of the international chaos which has been continuously and relentlessly on the increase in this our day. It is a time of acute distress and perplexity; and in the Greek text the word that is translated "perplexity" really means "no way out." And how true it is that the nations can find no way out of this distress! Every hoped-for remedy, when attempted, results in failure, while the distress continues and increases.

It seems evident, then, that the "earth," with its various elements, symbolizes the civil governments and other arrangements under which the peoples of the world have lived in a more or less orderly manner throughout the centuries. Now order is giving way to disorder, as the **kosmos**, or order of things which we have called "civilization" rapidly deteriorates into chaos. The ingenuity of man, scientific and otherwise, is being utilized chiefly in promoting destructive strife among the nations, and oftentimes within the nations.

(Continued on page 34)

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THE SIGN IN HEAVEN

(Continued from page 31)

Old standards of law and order are giving way to the anarchistic theory that one person has as much prerogative as another to determine what is right and what is wrong. Hence, adding to other phases of world-wide distress is the rapid spread of moral anarchy. How aptly, indeed, does the restlessness of the sea illustrate this breaking down of a world order! The Prophet David, using the same symbolism, and referring to the kingdoms of the world as "mountains," tells us that though the mountains "be carried into the midst of the sea," we should not fear. —Ps. 46:2, 3

What, then, are the "heavens" which, up until the due time for the presence of the Lord, exercised "power" or control over the symbolic earth? A very definite factor in holding together the "civilization" which we now see falling apart has been the power of religious restraint. This has been true in practically every part of the earth, in heathendom as well as in Christendom. The restraining views and methods have varied in different lands, depending upon the alleged characteristics of the particular god or gods whose laws were made binding upon the people; but practically everywhere, and for centuries, the governments of the earth have controlled the people by making them believe that the laws which they bound upon them had been ordained by a deity, or deities, whose authority was supreme, and whose ability to punish lawbreakers was unlimited.

Now, however, this element of world order is rapidly losing its power to control the people, and one of the great fears of society's doctors who are trying to keep a dying world alive is that the onrushing forces of atheism, implemented as they are by powerful antireligious govern-

ments, will yet completely destroy religious influence in the affairs of men.

This, we believe, is what the Master referred to as the shaking of the powers of the heavens. We know that the literal heavens exercise a tremendous power over the literal earth, hence the symbolism in which ecclesiastical authority over the nations is seen as the "heavens" is a very apt one indeed. Through the prophet the Lord said, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways." (Isa. 55:9) Here is the thought behind the symbolism of the "heavens"—they are higher than the earth, and men have been caused to believe that the edicts of the religious institutions of the earth have been above the ways of men, hence should be obeyed as coming from God.

It is true that God's ways are higher than ours, and also that they are true and righteous altogether. But we should remember that a false god is the prince of this world, or as Paul describes him, the "god of this world." (John 12:31; II Cor. 4:4) This is Satan, the Devil, the archenemy of God and man, and the deceiver of all nations. (Rev. 20:1-3) This unseen "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2) has ruled the world to a large extent through the false religious systems of the earth.

In the Book of Revelation we are told of a "woman . . . which reigneth over the kings of the earth." (Rev. 17:18) This woman is also described as a "city"—an unholy city. (Rev. 17:5; 18:2-4, 10) It is said that this woman is "the mother of harlots," and that the "inhabitants of the earth" were made "drunk with the wine of her fornication." (Rev. 17:2) In contrast to this picture we are told of another woman, a "chaste virgin," who becomes the "bride" of Christ, and who with him is to reign over the earth for a thousand years. She also is spoken of, together with her Bridegroom, as a "city"—the "holy city, new Jerusalem,"

which comes "down from God out of heaven." (II Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:17; 20:4, 6; 21:2, 10) It is clear, we think, that the harlot woman who commits fornication with the kings of the earth represents a counterfeit of Christ's kingdom—that counterfeit which men have called "Christendom," but which is described by God as "Babylon."

Perhaps the most marked identification of this "harlot" woman is contained in the assertion that the nations were made drunk with the wine of her fornication. This is a very apt symbolism of the union of the apostate church with the civil governments of Europe. Christ is the true Head and Bridegroom in the kingdom to be established by him during his second presence. The true church becomes his bride following her exaltation to glory, honor, and immortality in the "first resurrection." (Rev. 19:7; 20:6) Her test of loyalty to her prospective and heavenly Bridegroom has been to wait for his return, and meanwhile to suffer the reproaches of the world while she lays down her life in his service, preparing herself to be united with him in the kingdom.

But the church which became apostate was not willing to wait for her Lord to return. Instead, harlot-like, she joined hands with civil governments, and then claimed that this union constituted Christ's kingdom on earth. This was the wine, the doctrine, of her fornication, and with it the nations were led into a drunken frenzy of almost continual warfare with one another, all blasphemously in the name of the Lord. One section of Christendom was pitted against another from time to time and in whatever manner it suited the best interests of their unholy mistress, the apostate church.

This does not imply that there was nothing good in the laws sanctioned and upheld by the unholy alliance of church and state, for in some respects those laws were taken from the Scriptures. Murder on the part of indi-

viduals was prohibited, although legalized murder, called war, was glorified. Theft was forbidden, although in the name of the Lord the people were robbed in many ways by both the civil and religious authorities which held them in virtual slavery. The divine institution of family and home was upheld, and in some other respects the laws of the true God were copied. Good or bad—and partly both—the restraining influences of these higher powers, which reached the people by means of the civil authorities of the day, held “civilization” together.

It was far from an ideal world, but a semblance of order was maintained, even though largely because of the ignorance and superstition of the people, which through the centuries had been fostered by the harlot woman. The people were made to believe that any inclination to disobey “the powers that be” would lead to dire consequences—if not in this life, then surely after death. The fear of eternal torture was held over them as a whip to keep them in slavery to a system under which princes grew fat in luxury, and priests grew rich in their exploitation of the people by promising them a quick passage through an imaginary, yet Devil-inspired purgatory. It mattered not to the rulers if their subjects were ignorant paupers, so long as they obeyed their dictates without question, and kept the peace.

Is it a dark picture which we have drawn? Well, it happened in the “Dark Ages”—a period which was made dark by the misrule of a counterfeit kingdom of Christ. But it was not to last forever! The light that foretells the approach of a new day began gradually to dawn. Napoleon, whatever his sins may have been, struck a deathblow to the system that ruled the world during the Dark Ages when he took the Pope a prisoner. The discovery of America and the growth of American democracy helped also to break the shackles which had bound Europe. The rapid increase of knowledge along all lines which resulted from

the invention of movable type was another contributing factor leading toward liberty.

But while the almost universal control of the old world by the power which was seated in Rome was broken, the ideology of that wicked system was adopted independently by most of the rulers of Europe. They made state churches out of many of the Protestant systems, uniting with them as they formerly had done with Catholicism. So the "powers of the heavens," though now divided, still ruled; still held the people under restraint. (Matt. 24:29; Luke 21:26) This situation continued without much outward change until the beginning of World War I in 1914.

With the outbreak of the war, forces came into play which began drastically to shake the powers of the heavens—ecclesiastical control. In that war, as in the past, the "wine" of Babylon's fornication flowed freely. In Germany, and in the countries allied with Germany, the soldiers were told by the clergy that if they died on the field of battle fighting the "enemy" they were sure of a heavenly reward; the reason being that in fighting for their government, they were fighting for God. In all the countries allied against Germany the men were told the same thing. Yes, to the shame of the American clergy, they too joined in pouring this "wine" which had been prepared originally by the apostate church of Rome.

The "wine of fornication" did its work, at least partially, during that First World War, but the aftereffects were not at all what the nations expected. The intermingling of thoughts and viewpoints which was bound to occur when young and thinking men of all parts of the world were brought together—sometimes in the trenches, sometimes in prison camps and in other ways—had an effect. Doubts were raised in the minds of many as to whether their side alone had been fighting for the Lord. That the objectives of the war on both sides were not attained caused a further

disillusionment, as through the trying years which followed that stark fact became more and more apparent.

With disillusionment came a world-wide turning to pleasure, legitimate and otherwise. The people who through the distressing years of the war fought for God, as they had supposed, now, in fulfilment of the Scriptures, became "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." (II Tim. 3:1, 4) But even more significant, the people of the world, on the whole, not only forgot God, but became unbelievers. The extent to which this is true is now apparent by the fact that in the two most religious countries of the world, the United States and Great Britain, not more than one in ten ever steps inside a church.

But this is not all. Out of that World War came the birth of the first communist government in Russia. From the very start one of the characteristics of that government was its opposition to religion. The Greek Catholic Church, which was the illicit mistress of the czarist government, was ruthlessly banned and her fraudulent practices brought publicly to the attention of the people in many ways. The teaching of atheism was encouraged and sponsored by the government.

Since then it is true that, for reasons of expedience, Moscow claims to have granted freedom of religion within Russia, but this is largely in name only. While the Greek Catholic Church has been given a "legal" standing, it means only that it is permitted to carry on with its ritual on behalf of a minority of the older generation which has not accepted Moscow's atheistic teachings under which the youth of the land are reared.

And now this atheistic government, seizing the opportunity presented by a weakened world, is expanding its influence beyond Russian territory. A large part of Germany is still subjected to this government-sponsored ideology of unbelief. The shadow is cast over Poland,

Rumania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and is threatening other nations. Meanwhile, because such a very small minority of the people in the remaining countries of the earth have any faith in God, they are the more open to the growing influence of an ideology which officially rejects the idea of being subject to laws which are alleged to have come from a higher power.

It is this situation the world over that is contributing to the fear of those who wish to restore the status quo of the pre-1914 civilization. This is one of the great fears in the United States, particularly among those high in the government. One of the evidences of this is the fact that presidents have sent personal representatives to Rome to confer with the pope. The time was when a word from the Vatican would have restored at least an outward semblance of order in Europe. But the powers of the heavens are being shaken, and more and more their ability to hold the old order together is weakening.

This, then, is the sign that is appearing in the symbolic heavens, the sign of the presence of Christ, the new King of earth. On one occasion Jesus raised the question as to whether he would find faith on the earth when he came, and now we can see that this question was well justified. (Luke 18:8) And as Jesus foretold, the people of the nations are mourning, some because of the distress that has come directly to them and to their families, and others because they see that the "civilization" which gave them prosperity and power over their fellows is falling apart.

A very realistic description of this is given us in Revelation, chapter 18. The opening verse of this chapter depicts the return of our Lord. John describes him as "a mighty angel," whose power caused the earth to be filled with his glory. First he pronounces doom upon the counterfeit of his kingdom, and bids those loyal to him to separate themselves therefrom, that they be not partakers of the plagues

which destroy it. This message has already gone out to the Lord's people, and thousands have responded. Now the work of destruction is well advanced, and we can see the beginning of the foretold "mourning" of those who prospered so greatly under this system.

"And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning," wrote the apostle. John also writes that the supporters of this system will say, "Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour [the hour of her judgment] so great riches is come to nought."—Rev. 18:9, 10, 16, 17

The Scriptures are not limited to the use of only one symbolism to illustrate great truths of the divine plan. We have seen how fitting is the lesson of the powers of the heavens being shaken as one of the signs which betoken the second presence of the Lord. We have seen also that in full harmony with this is the Revelator's description of the waning powers of the ecclesiastical heavens in which he tells of the fall and destruction of mystic Babylon. But it is interesting in this connection to note that in the vision of this destruction of the harlot woman John sees her "utterly burned with fire."—Rev. 18:8

So it is that "fire," as well as "shaking," is one of the symbols used to portray the overthrow of various elements of "this present evil world." (Gal. 1:4) For this reason "fire" is associated with the manifestation of the presence of Christ; that is, he is revealed by "fire" as well as by the "shaking" of the heavens. On this point the Apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonian church, says, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that

obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—
II Thess. 1:7, 8

The “mighty angels” which are to be revealed with Jesus are undoubtedly the members of his glorified church. The word angel means “messenger,” and these will be messengers with him to dispense the blessings of the new kingdom. But first every vestige of Satan’s empire must be destroyed, and all opposition to the laws of God’s new world broken. The gathering to himself of those who will reign with him is part of the work of Christ in the first years of his second presence. This is fully accomplished before the old order is completely destroyed, hence Paul’s reference to the “flaming fire” which reveals the presence of Christ when his church is with him is a sign which is still future. It is closely associated with the “fire” which destroys mystic Babylon. We can even now see the beginning of the smoldering flame; but Babylon still lives, although dying. Christians who are faithful to their Lord shall be with him before the final phase of her destruction is accomplished.

Now let us observe that it is both by the shaking of the heavens and the “flaming fire” that the presence of Christ is revealed. Matthew’s account of the Lord’s prophecy on this point says that when the sign of the Son of Man appears in heaven—that is, the shaking of the powers of the heavens rendering them incapable of adequately controlling the restless masses as once they had done—then all the tribes of the earth would mourn. Following this, “they” see the Son of Man coming in the heavens. The text indicates that the mourning of the people commences before they see the real cause of their distress; but to the Lord’s own people, the faithful watchers, both the shaking of the symbolic heavens and the distress of the nations in the greatest time of trouble the world has ever known, are signs of his presence and of the end of the age. It is important thus to distinguish between **our** reading of the

signs, and the more complete development of them by which the eyes of **all** mankind will be opened to discern that it is the return of Christ, the "King of kings, and Lord of lords" to establish his kingdom that has brought about the destruction of the old order which men call civilization.—Rev. 19:16

In this connection it is well to understand the manner in which the people of all nations will "see" the Lord. We have already noted the scriptures which emphasize that the resurrected Christ, as a personality, cannot be seen literally by human eyes; that both he and the Heavenly Father "dwell in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see." (I Tim. 6:16) But just as the heavens in which the "sign" of the Son of man appears are symbolic, so also is the sight with which his presence is discerned. The use of the eye as a symbol of discernment is quite common in the Scriptures. Speaking of the ability of his disciples to comprehend certain truths concerning the divine plan which were hidden to others, Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear."—Matt. 13:16

Later, the Apostle Paul, describing the knowledge of the Early Church concerning the first presence of Jesus, when he came as a man to redeem men, said, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. 2:9) The Prophet Isaiah, writing of Christ and describing him as the "arm of the Lord," informs us that the arm of the Lord will be revealed "in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." (Isa. 52:10; 53:1) Job, expressing his confidence in the Creator, said, "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God"—yet the Scriptures tell us that actually no man can see God in a literal sense, and live.—Job 19:26; Exod. 33:20

These are but samples of the many passages of Scripture in which the words "see" and "sight," as well as the eye itself, are used to symbolize discernment. And it is in this sense that every eye will eventually see Jesus in the clouds of heaven. It means that they will discern the fact of his presence by virtue of the sign in the heavens; that is, that the former powers of ecclesiastical control over the masses have been broken, resulting in world chaos.

But even so, it is well to remember that in our study of the development of the plan of God we are not dealing with minutes, or hours, or days, but with years and ages. What requires but a few words of Scripture to describe, and a few seconds to read, may and usually does refer to that which takes years in development. So it is with the sign of the Son of man which appears in the symbolic heavens. It has already appeared, and as watchers we discern it and understand its meaning. The world sees also, and fear fills their hearts because of it, but as yet they do not discern its real meaning; they do not "see" that it means the presence of a new King of earth, a new spiritual ruling power, the foretold of a "new heavens" which, in association with a new symbolic earth, will be the new world of tomorrow.

Later, as the sequence of world-changing events continues to emphasize to the people the utter futility of all human efforts to bring order out of chaos, and peace and prosperity out of war and starvation, in the Lord's own way they will be made to realize the true meaning of what is occurring—that a new King has taken control and that his first work has been to set aside the old order of things which was based upon selfishness, that the people might the more fully realize their need of Christ's new government. Then they will realize that what they first thought to be a dire calamity, and concerning which they said, "Alas, alas," was but evidence that the King of a new world order had come, and was preparing to establish his righteous kingdom in the earth. □

The British Section

"The Precious Things Of Heaven"

DEUTERONOMY 33:13

THE people of Israel were blessed with the precious things of heaven in that they enjoyed the blessing of having God's Law, and the messages of the prophets sent to them from time to time. The people of Israel also enjoyed God's favor and providential care in proportion to their faithfulness to the revelation given to them. (Rom. 3:1, 2) This is likewise true of the members of spiritual Israel, the Christian church, gathered out from the world during the Gospel Age.

Much that was addressed to natural Israel was—on account of their being a typical people, and because, in many

ways they pictured God's people of the Gospel Age—specially applicable to this latter class, and comes with added emphasis to us "upon whom the ends of the ages are come." (I Cor. 10:11, R.V.) This is indicated by the prophet when he says, "The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel."—Isa. 9:8

To natural Israel were promised only earthly blessings of a temporary character if obedient to their Law Covenant, although earthly blessings of a more permanent kind would be theirs if faithful under the new Law Covenant during the thousand years of Messiah's kingdom. (Deut. 28:1-14; Jer. 31:31-34) But to spiritual Israel God has promised "the precious things of heaven" in the sense of heavenly or spiritual blessings, heavenly hopes, heavenly manna, and a precious rest of a heavenly or spiritual character. He has also promised dealings and providences

which, if rightly received, will make us more and more appreciative of present heavenly blessings, and a growing realization of the heavenly hopes to be realized through a share in the first resurrection. That will be an inheritance "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (I Pet. 1:4,5) A number of these precious things of heaven are brought to our attention in the New Testament.

The Precious Blood

The greatest and most valuable of these precious things is the fact that through the ransom we have been redeemed from under the adamite condemnation which "passed upon all men." (Rom. 5:12) This atonement was provided by God's well-beloved Son, our Redeemer. The Apostle Peter speaks of "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The merit of this sacrifice "cleanseth us from all sin."—I Pet. 1:18, 19; I John 1:7

During our sojourn in the flesh we can appreciate only in part the preciousness of this wonderful gift. It is precious on account of the infinite value of the gift it secures for faithful believers, either in this age or the next—"eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."—Rom. 6:23

Precious Promises

The called ones of the Gospel Age, members of spiritual Israel, are promised, not an eternal earthly life and an earthly Canaan flowing with milk and honey, but divine life. Peter says that to us have been given "exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." (II Pet. 1:4) Could anything more precious, or valuable, or wonderful be imagined than that God, the great Creator of the Universe, should be willing to share his own divine nature with some who were at one time members of the fallen human family—"children of wrath, even as others"? (Eph. 2:3) No wonder the Apostle Paul does not even attempt to describe or illustrate such a stupendous hope or prize, but says,

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”—I Cor. 2:9

That Jesus should be given the divine nature, and in the resurrection become “the express image” of the Father’s person, is understandable. (Heb. 1:3) Of him it is written, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” (Rev. 5:12) But that the Father should offer the same prize of the high calling to all those who, after being justified by faith, follow faithfully in his steps, would be beyond one’s power to believe, were it not so clearly revealed in the Word of God. Let us seek to appreciate increasingly this pearl of great price!

A Precious Corner Stone

We are told through the prophet, “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation . . . a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.” (Isa. 28:16) Zion seems to be used here to symbolize the heavenly phase of the kingdom. The first “stone”

of this Zion class to be selected was our Lord Jesus. He is also the chief corner stone of God’s temple, into line with which all other living stones must come.

The preparation of this “stone” at the cost of trial and sacrifice was a work very precious in the Father’s sight. The result was very precious too, as suggested by Paul’s words, “Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.” (Phil. 2:9) To him we may now come as living stones, to be chiseled and shaped and built up into him as members of Zion. Indeed, the time has now come when the few last remaining members will soon be joined to the Zion class beyond the veil. “When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.”—Ps. 102:16

Trial of Faith—Precious

Just as the preparation of Jesus for his position at the Father’s right hand was very precious in the Father’s sight, calling forth as it did the Father’s utmost attention and care, even so the preparation of the church is equally precious in his sight. (Ps. 116:15)

Peter says, "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than [the trying] of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire."—I Pet. 1:7

This preparation of the new creation involves a great many fiery experiences for the development, testing, and strengthening of our faith, until we reach a point of complete confidence and trust in all that the Lord our God has made plain to us. We must learn to trust him where we cannot trace him, and rest in perfect calm and confidence in his wisdom and love. Every item of our faith must be tested and proved, that it might be "found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."—I Pet. 1:7

God's Thoughts Precious

One of the principal means for the preparation of spiritual Israel for the kingdom is the truth concerning the divine plan as revealed in the Word of God. We are to be a sanctified class. (I Cor. 1:2; I Pet. 1:2) The work of sanctification, of being made holy, or fully developed as new creatures, is principally brought about by the truth.

We are to meditate upon it, and seek to come into accord with it.—John 17:17

Hence the psalmist very appropriately says, "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" (Ps. 139:17) These thoughts, including thoughts of our pardon and recovery to divine favor, are indeed precious. They include thoughts of our renewal, upholding, supplying, educating, perfecting, and a thousand others which perpetually well up in the mind of the Most High, and are revealed to us through his Word. These fill us with adoring wonder and reverent surprise that the infinite mind of God should turn so many thoughts toward us who are so insignificant and unworthy.

Specially is our Heavenly Father thoughtful for us in the midst of the trials of the narrow way. The psalmist informs us that "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." (Ps. 116:15) The baptism into death, the daily dying of the justified human nature, is precious in his sight. He knows exactly the weight of the cross, and the things that were gain to us

which we have counted loss for Christ's sake.—Rom. 6:3; I Cor. 15:31; Phil. 3:7

"He Is Precious"

Another phase of our Christian experience is our personal relationship to our Lord Jesus. Of this the psalmist says, "He is thy Lord, and [therefore] worship thou him." (Ps. 45:11) Many are the kindly providences and gracious provisions of things temporal as well as things spiritual for which we are continually thankful.

How often we, like the Apostle Peter in his experience, might have completely sunk in the troubled waters of this present evil world, did not the Lord put forth his strong hand and lift us up. His faithfulness in the fulfilment of the many gracious promises to us—the rewards of faith—prompts us to say with the apostle, "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious."—I Pet. 2:7

Precious Fruit

Finally we are reminded that as the husbandman waits patiently for the precious fruit of the earth, until it receive the early and latter

rain, so the Lord is waiting patiently for the full development of the members of Christ, until the showers of divine grace have accomplished all that is needed toward the full sanctification and perfecting of the members of this company. (James 5:7, 8) The early and latter rain [the early rain coming in November and December, followed by the latter rain in the spring of the year] were all that were necessary for the ripening of the fruits of the earth in Palestine and other countries of the Near East. This appropriately pictures all that is necessary of the showers of divine grace and truth for the perfecting of the new creation.

Of these riches of grace we may say that practically all have been poured out, and our Heavenly Father now waits patiently to receive the last members of the church to himself. His patient waiting for nearly two thousand years for a completed church will indeed be abundantly rewarded by his having a company of sons around him in his own likeness, and able to understand him fully, possessing all power to glorify him

throughout the eternal ages.
"For the Lord hath chosen
Zion; he hath desired it for
his [eternal] habitation. This
is my rest for ever: here will

I dwell; for I have desired it."

—Ps. 132:13, 14

"Unto you therefore which be-
lieve he is precious."

—1 Peter 2:7

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Vineyard Echoes

Portrush, 1972

An Act of Faith

WHEN the time came for planning the Portrush Convention, 1972, our Irish brethren were faced with a difficult problem. Conditions in Northern Ireland, so far from improving, were tending to worsen, and there was some doubt as to whether or not a convention could be arranged; and if one were found to be possible, would the friends from England, Scotland, and other distant parts feel able to attend?

Enquiries amongst prospective speakers brought a willing response to "come over and help us" should the way be opened and the Lord's will be indicated as approving the proposed gathering. Then it was decided to approach the various sources of accommodation, etc., and here again the response was favourable, with the result that plans went ahead and programmes were printed and circulated in the firm faith that our Heavenly Father would overrule the labours of the dear ones in Ireland and reward their confidence and hope that yet once again the Portrush Convention would prove a means of blessing and joy to those able to avail themselves of the fellowship and ministry thus afforded.

It is true to say that this was indeed an act of faith on the part of the Lord's people in Ireland, and although the number attending was only about half that of normal years, yet those who were able to avail themselves of the

opportunity all testified to the richness of the blessing received, and to the protecting care and love of our gracious Heavenly Father in providing a season of peaceful and happy fellowship in the midst of the raging elements of human passion and satanic strife which speak so clearly of the time soon to come when all these things shall be done away and men's hearts be softened and mellowed under the firm but benign influence of the Prince of Peace when his bride hath made herself ready.

The convention opened on Saturday, 27th May, when Brother Lang of Londonderry welcomed the brethren, and expressed the joy of the Irish friends at once more being privileged to gather together and to act as hosts to those who had come from England and Scotland to share in the ministry of the Word and in praise and worship with others of "like precious faith." We are all His children, said Brother Lang, and above all, in this convention we desire that his will may be done. The beautiful words of Psalm 134, "Bless ye the Lord, . . . lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord," were very appropriate to our gathering together in the prevailing circumstances, under difficult conditions, to hear our Heavenly Father's Word expounded, and to strengthen and encourage one another by just waiting upon the Lord for the blessing that always comes to those who seek to serve him.

Following these words of welcome, messages of love and greetings by letter and tape were passed on, thereby widening the circle of fellowship by the presence in spirit of many who would gladly have been present in person had that been possible.

Come Ye Apart

The opening discourse of the convention seemed to express the mood of heart in which we had met together. Based on our Lord's loving words to the twelve when he sent them out without script or money to preach and teach,

and to heal the sick, (Mark 6:7-12 and 30-32), the lesson was drawn of the joy of service bringing a quick response and ready reward, while at the same time engendering a feeling of elation and zealous enthusiasm which can, if not checked, result in an excess of confidence and an impairment of wisdom and judgment.

Our Lord loved these dear disciples for their zeal, but he may well have wondered whether, under the tests which were to come, they would stand up to the intense strain of suffering that would accompany them. So he said, "Come ye yourselves apart . . . and rest awhile." Often he says this to us in times such as these, and draws us aside in quiet fellowship and worship, not only to encourage and strengthen our faith, but sometimes to curb our eager spirit of joyous accomplishment. In a country such as Ireland, said the speaker, torn as it is with strife and dissension, He is able to "make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water" to those who love him supremely.

The intense eagerness to see their Master enthroned as Israel's great King and Deliverer was, to our Lord, both joy and sorrow, and he called them away to a secret place where they could close the door of the heart and drop the curtain of the mind on things around them, a place where the Father himself would speak to them as he had spoken to him when rest and refreshing were essential to sustain the strain of joyful service.

We have the joy of the Lord, the full assurance of faith, the tender solicitude of our Shepherd, the precious promises of the Word. What more can we ask of him who has called us to such great glory and blessedness, whispering to us as he did to his disciples of old, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert [quiet] place and rest awhile." "Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

The Sunday Sessions

Our Sunday sessions opened with the manna reading and further greetings from other classes and brethren. This was followed by a very helpful discourse based upon Psalm 40:17: "The Lord thinketh upon me." Our minds were directed to the wonderful promises of the Word in which we are assured of our Heavenly Father's constant care over us, whatever the circumstances and conditions through which we are passing. The Prophet Isaiah expresses this thought in beautiful language when he says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child . . . ? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands."—Isa. 49:15, 16

It was pointed out that David was not only a prophet, but also a type of Christ, and we have full scriptural authority for applying this 40th Psalm to our Lord, who was indeed never alone, because his Father was with him always—thinking upon him and caring for him. Additionally, we were reminded that the promises portrayed in this and many other psalms were shared by the body members, the anointed ones, as we are told by our Lord in Matthew 5:3, and by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 1:26-28. How wonderful that God should thus deal with us and think upon us; that we are called to be partakers of his own divine nature! He even thought upon us before we came into existence, and all his thoughts have been for our highest good. He has brought us up out of the horrible pit and the miry clay of worldly, fleshly things, and set our feet upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.

The speaker referred to some special ways in which God thinks upon his people. He looks upon us not as we are, but as we can be if we submit to his will. We see only one side of the woven tapestry of our lives, he sees the other, the far more beautiful side. God thinks upon us as those in whom he has confidence, those he can trust. Do we ever

betray that trust? We must trust him as he trusts us, in loving confidence. God thinks upon us with infinite patience. (Ps. 103:13-14) He covers our weaknesses with the precious blood and merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we in turn must control and overcome those weaknesses to the best of our ability.

Strange as it may seem, our Heavenly Father thinks upon us even when he appears to be unmindful of our needs. Jesus himself on one occasion gave a striking example of this apparent lack of response when the woman of Canaan sought his help for her daughter who was "grievously vexed with a devil." "But he answered her not a word." Her faith, however, was so strong that he finally commended her, and granted her request. The woman's faith was equal to the occasion, and we may well ask ourselves the question, Is our faith equally strong when he seems not to answer?

One final point was made, namely, that God thinks upon us as individuals, each different and each needing individual treatment. We are placed where we can serve him best, and we are dealt with as individual members of his family of sons. We must respond in this way, doing our part as body members, always remembering that whatever the trials and testings which he sees fit to permit, his promise never fails—"The Lord thinketh upon me."

Prayer, Praise, and Testimony

A full afternoon's session was devoted to prayer, praise, and testimony on Sunday, and the friends took full advantage of the time available to tell of their experiences, recount their blessings and testings, and generally to exhort and build one another up while bearing in mind the difficulties and dangers which face us all in these last days. Special reference was made to loved ones who had finished their course since last we met in convention, and the love of the brethren toward those who had suffered loss in this

way was markedly manifest, bringing to mind the joyous thought of the apostle when he said that "we sorrow not as others which have no hope." Special hymns were sung by request with these thoughts in mind, and our hearts were lifted up as we realised the fullness of our Father's love in times of special need.

The King's Horses

Sunday evening provided two discourses, both of which were greatly enjoyed. First we were taken back to the Song of Solomon 1:9: "I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots." The horse, in scripture, is given symbolic significance in various ways, but here, said the speaker, the horse is compared with women—a particular woman to which direct reference is made—"My love"! And it was to be noted that the horses did not belong to Solomon; they were Pharaoh's. Solomon bought them, the picture given being that of Christ and his church, his prospective bride. Just as Solomon bought these horses from Egypt, to enter a new service under a new master, so our Lord has bought us with his own precious blood, taking us out of the world and opening up for us a new and living way—new views, new motives, new principles, new plans; a new creation—Eph. 4:22-24

Let us see to it that we keep out of Egypt, serving our new Master, our new King, for these horses were king's horses, bought by a king for royal service, as was shown by the plumes on their heads. So we must show our plumes of character-likeness to our King, that we may honour him when subject to the scrutiny of the people. We walk in newness of life, stepping out as well-trained horses, holding our heads high—a credit to the Master who has bought us. We are well fed with spiritual food. Never let it be said that we go down again into Egypt for food; our God supplies all our needs. He dresses us, too, in silver trappings, as becomes the king's horses (Isa. 61:10), and final-

ly we are trained under his perfect control to do his will and to follow in his steps who is our Leader and Lord.

This was a happy little talk—picturesque, descriptive, and very true to the experiences it was designed to represent. We enjoyed it very much.

Kept by the Power of God

The second talk of our evening session was entitled, "Kept by the Power of God," the well-known words of exhortation from I Peter 1:3-5. We thought this subject important and necessary in these days of trouble and distress, said the speaker. The world-wide conditions of strife and wickedness as pictured in Psalm 46 bring forcibly to mind our need to be kept from the powers of evil which are all around us.

Peter had many weaknesses and failures to contend with; he knew the meaning of these words, written not only to the Jews, to whom he was the special messenger, but to the Lord's people everywhere, both Jew and Gentile. In these early verses of his epistle he lays down some of the qualifications necessary to those who are called to the wonderful inheritance held out to all who are "kept by the power of God" and brought into joint-heirship and relationship with their Lord and Head.

Many are endeavouring to bring blessing and hope to the poor human race, but there is only one way to do this, and that is through Christ and his church, called by God and kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. To be kept is to be guarded and protected from harm. (Deut. 32:9-10) How precious we are in God's sight—"the apple of his eye." (Ps. 91:14-16) In these days of trouble and distress the symbolic trumpet sounds louder and louder. (Exod. 19:19; Heb. 12:19-21; Ps. 81:7) The keeping power of God over his faithful ones of old is well exemplified in Joseph, David, and others, and these are examples

for us who are called to bring about the accomplishment of the Father's purpose through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Shepherd of the sheep.

It was noted that we are not promised divine power to keep us from trials, but to keep us in them, and this protective care is dependent on our faith, for "the just shall live by faith." Even the "very elect" can be deceived, and it is only by the protection provided by the shield of faith that we can finally be to the praise and glory of our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Head.

Threefold Cords

Monday brought us to the closing day of our convention, and the first discourse was entitled, "Some Threefold Cords of Scripture," the brother's thoughts being based upon Ecclesiastes 4:12. The first cord was presented as embracing the whole plan of God—the creation of man in perfect accord with the divine law of obedience, and the necessity for that law to be observed if life were to be sustained.

An important strand in that cord is the doctrine of the ransom, the corresponding price of I Timothy 2:5-6; another strand in the cord is the times of restitution (Acts 3:19-21), which, said the speaker, we see related to the work of the first advent as effect to cause. These great doctrinal truths must stand or fall together; we cannot accept one and reject the other.

The second cord was found in the time features of Daniel's prophecy. Finally another cord was found in Israel's double, with its comforting assurances of returning favour as given in Isaiah 40:1-2 and Jeremiah 16:14-15. There was much food for thought in this interesting presentation of many important features of the Word.

Next we were taken to the lovely words of Psalm 103, with special reference to verse 2: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." It is not sufficient to

render lip service alone; the psalmist says, "All that is within me [heart and soul], bless his holy name." There are times when we need to enter into our closets and close the door and kneel before the Lord our Maker in praise and gratitude for all the blessings of life, both temporal and spiritual. David had implicit faith in God, and he realised the loving-kindness of him who "forgiveth all thine iniquities." This gracious provision of God's mercy was granted to his worthies of old in the same way that it is to us, for justification is no different in principle, although it differs in application.

In the church's development God calls for service under trial and testing, but there are wonderful compensating blessings of peace, joy, and divine approval. We live a richer and fuller life than any worldly person can ever experience. Mankind will see ultimately that the Lord is gracious; but we see the Lord's great goodness now. With all his knowledge and ability man has no power over time, for as the psalmist says in this 103rd Psalm, verse 15, "As for man, his days are as grass, as a flower of the field so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone. . . ." The just sentence of death upon Adam is met by the ransom for all, whereby God has provided a way of escape through the sacrifice of his only begotten Son. The great work of giving the blessings of life to all mankind who will accept them is the wonderful privilege of those who shall be part of the bride class, of whom the psalmist is speaking in this 103rd Psalm when he says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: . . . who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

A Word of Hope

After lunch, our thoughts were directed for a little while to what must be amongst the most beautiful of all Paul's writings—I Corinthians 13. However, the theme was not on this occasion primarily that of love, but of hope,

the discourse being entitled, "And Now Abideth . . . Hope!"
—I Cor. 13:13

We have grown so accustomed to placing hope between her sister virtues of faith and love that it seems a little strange for hope to step out of line and stand, as it were, somewhat cold and unprotected. Yet hope is a very wonderful element of character in its own right, and the hope that the apostle was referring to, and which we enjoy as children of God, is unique—no other hope can compare with it, or in any way measure up to it. The psalmist (Ps. 42:5) asks himself the question, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me?" He answers, "Hope thou in God . . . my God."

Fear is natural to the natural man, but it should have no place in a heart filled with hope. Paul says, "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15:13) There is no room here for fear and despondency. If our hope were centred in an unrisen Christ we might well be despondent. But, says the apostle, "Now is Christ risen, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

Here is the very hub, the pulsating centre of hope for ourselves, for the world, and according to Paul, for the whole universe, when in the ages to come God will display how immense are the resources of his grace to us in Christ Jesus.—Eph. 2:4-8, NEB

There are times when even our glorious hope dims and flickers. Then it is that hope's sister virtues are at hand—faith and love—one on the right and, the other on the left. Strengthened by faith and enfolded by love, our hope shines forth, a star in the firmament of God's majestic purpose for all who will to have the opportunity of coming to worship him in spirit and in truth.

God Our Refuge

The concluding discourse was based upon the 46th

Psalm: "God is our refuge and strength." These wonderful words were, in fact, the theme thought of this 1972 convention, and in the midst of turmoil and trouble surrounding us in Northern Ireland, the expressive words of the 46th Psalm came as a refreshing shower to the hearts of those who had come in faith to share the joys of fellowship with others of like precious faith.

The dear brother who spoke drew attention to the exceeding great and precious promises which are ours, made the more precious in times such as these when trials and testings bear so heavily upon us. Through all our varied experiences our Heavenly Father has been "a very present help" and a refuge in the time of storm. God's unfailing law of justice must operate, but he has provided a city of refuge in Christ. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who have fled to him. If, of course, we forsake the city of refuge, we again come under condemnation.

With these thoughts in mind we can echo the words of this beautiful psalm, "Therefore will not we fear," for our God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we could ask. Even though disaster occur and evil seems to engulf us, we know that God is with us, and will help us in every time of need.

There is a river, the river of truth, that makes glad "the city of God"—the church. We are the tabernacles of God; he dwells in us, and the fountains of his grace are full to overflowing.

Verse 6 of our psalm brings us back from the city of God to the raging elements of human passion and strife as set forth in the prophecy of Haggai (2:6-7), and confirmed by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 12:27.

The last section of the psalm shows the aftermath of the time of trouble; the fury of the storm is past and those who remain are called upon to come and see "the works of the Lord"—the destruction of the evil works of the Ad-

versary. God's voice is heard: "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

With this inspiring reflection upon our theme psalm, the convention was brought to a close in a spirit of happy and confident rejoicing. Our Heavenly Father had brought us together, through the dangers and difficulties which at one time threatened to thwart our best endeavours. Now with grateful hearts and increased love and joy in fellowship, we went our various ways to think upon the blessings received, and carrying rich memories of a glorious theme which had centred in our hearts during these happy days of fellowship: "God is our refuge and strength . . . the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." □



Speakers' Appointments

These speakers are associated with the Pilgrim Department of The Dawn. Their services are furnished free upon request. Address your request to Dawn Bible Students Association, East Rutherford, N. J. A visit will be arranged when possible.

MIKE BALKO

Kansas City, Mo.	Aug. 22
Denver, Colo.	23
Ranchester, Wyo.	24
Havre, Mont.	27
Langley, B. C.	30

G. M. JEUCK

Catawissa, Pa.	Aug. 6
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A. H. KRUMPOLT

Baltimore, Md.	Aug. 13
Philadelphia, Pa.	13

PANTEL HATGIS

Greece	June-Sept.
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K. M. NAIL

Miami, Fla.	Aug. 1
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Reidsville, Ga.	3	London, Ont.	24
Hendersonville, N. C.	4	Toronto, Ont.	25
Richmond, Va.	6	Buffalo, N. Y.	27
Lynchburg, Va.	7	Tanawanda, N. Y.	28
Norfolk, Va.	8	Rochester, N. Y.	29
Washington, D. C.	9	Catawissa, Pa.	30
Baltimore, Md.	10		
Pottstown, Pa.	11		
Allentown, Pa.	13		
York, Pa.	14		
Pittsburgh, Pa.	15		
West Newton, Pa.	16		
Elyria, Ohio	18		
Boston, Mass.	20		
Portland, Maine	22		
N. Brookfield, Mass.	23		
Agawam, Mass.	24		
Providence, R. I.	25		
New Haven, Conn.	27		
Hartford, Conn.	28		
Groton, Conn.	29		
		H. W. PRICE	
		Havre, Mont.	Aug. 1, 2
		Kalispell, Mont.	3, 4
		Spokane, Wash.	5
		Wenatchee, Wash.	6
		Kelowna, B. C. Area	8, 9
		STEPHEN SURACI	
		Hartford, Conn.	Aug. 20

		GEORGE PASSIOS		H. J. TIEMEYER	
Sayville, N. Y.	Aug. 6		York, Pa.	Aug. 27	
		HARRY PASSIOS		F. S. WASSMANN	
Chatham, Ont.	Aug. 23		Pottstown, Pa.	Aug. 6	

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BRITISH SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

		C. A. CORNELL		E. T. NADAL	
Dewsbury	Aug. 12		Newport	(Mon.) Sept. 3	
Latchford	13		Dublino	23, 24	
		J. HUMPHREY		W. F. READER	
Dewsbury	Sept. 16		Yeovil	Sept. 2, 3	
Latchford	17				

Conventions

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN., Aug. 6—2601 Fillmore St., N. E. Mrs. C. R. Newham, 2601 Fillmore St., N. E., 55418

CINCINNATI, OHIO, Aug. 20—2850 Dunaway. Mr. John Slavich, 126 S. 22nd St. Richmond, Ind. 47374

CHICAGO, ILL., Aug. 27—Masonic Temple, 5352 W. Chicago Ave. Mr. Arthur Jezuit, 140 Forest Glen Rd., Wood Dale, Ill. 60191

DETROIT, MICH., Aug. 27—North-west Branch YWCA, 25940 Grand River. Mr. Daniel Kaziak, 17559 Annchester Rd. 48219

JACKSON, MICH., Sept. 2-4—Jackson Community College, 2111 Emmons Rd. Mrs. Ray Lumley, 2531 Ashton Rd. 49203

NEW YORK, N. Y., Sept. 2-4—Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, 50th St. and Park Ave. Mr. G. M. Jeuck, 81 Blauvelt Rd. Nanuet, N. Y. 10954

SAN DIEGO, CALIF., Sept. 2-4—Mrs. Gilbert L. Rice, 4005 Olympic St. 92115

SEATTLE, WASH., Sept. 2-4—Norway Center, 300 Third Ave. West. Miss Mary Stevens, 6525 24th N. W. 98107

BUFFALO, N. Y., Sept. 30-Oct. 1
POTTSTOWN, PA., Oct. 1

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIF., Oct. 14, 15

NEW LONDON, CONN., Oct. 15
ORLANDO, FLA., Oct. 29

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Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts

AUGUST 3—"Separate yourselves from the people of the land."—Ezra 10:11 (Z. '99-203 Hymn 150)

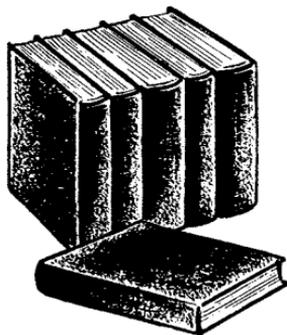
AUGUST 10—"If there be any consolation [comfort] in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."—Philippians 2:1,2 (Z. '04-296 Hymn 23)

AUGUST 17—"Quench not the Spirit."—I Thessalonians 5:19 (Z. '03-25 Hymn 1)

AUGUST 24—"Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are."—John 17:11 (Z. '03-77 Hymn 165)

AUGUST 31—"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thy hand, O king; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."—Daniel 3:17, 18 (Z. 99-172 Hymn 126)

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That the church is “the temple of the living God”—peculiarly “his workmanship”; that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel age—ever since Christ became the world’s Redeemer and the chief corner stone of this temple, through which, when finished, God’s blessings shall come “to all people,” and they find access to him.—I Cor. 3:16, 17; Eph. 2:20-22; Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:29

That meantime the chiseling, shaping, and polishing of consecrated believers in Christ’s atonement for sin progresses, and when the last of these “living stones,” “elect and precious,” shall have been made ready, the great Master Workman will bring all together in the first resurrection; and the temple shall be filled with his glory, and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium.—Rev. 15:5-8

That the basis of hope for the church and the world lies in the fact that “Jesus Christ, by the grace of God tasted death for every man,” “a ransom for all,” and will be “the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” “in due time.”—Heb. 2:9; John 1:9; I Tim. 2:5, 6

That the hope of the church is that she may be like her Lord, “see him as he is,” be a “partaker of the divine nature,” and share his glory as his joint-heir.—I John 3:2; John 17:24; Rom. 8:17; II Pet. 1:4

That the present mission of the church is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service to develop in herself every grace; to be God’s witness to the world; and to prepare to be the kings and priests in the next age.—Eph. 4:12; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:6; 20:6

That the hope for the world lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isaiah 35