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God in Christ Reconciling the World unto Himself

"All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation"—2 Cor. 5: 18, 19.

THE subject of God reconciling the world unto Himself through our Saviour Jesus Christ is surely most inspiring and encouraging to all who meditate upon this gracious redemption of the world of mankind, a "world of sinners lost and ruined by the fall."

At the outset it is well to recognise the great need for God to take the initiative if mankind were to be saved from the just sentence of death passed upon our first parents in the Garden of Eden because of disobedience. This is clearly shown in *Psa. 49: 6, 7*—"They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." Then we note the confident tone of verse 15—"But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me." The Psalmist's inspired hope for the future was based solely on God taking the initiative for any redemption of the human family.

Another point important to keep in mind is that any redemption of mankind was not on the basis of pardon. While God is loving and merciful with all His creatures, His dealings with them are on the basis of justice. This is stated in *Psa. 89: 14*—"Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face."

Also in the words of Moses in *Num. 14: 18* we see the Lord does not clear the guilty by overlooking sin, as we read—"The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation."

Then the Apostle Paul takes up the subject of the guilt of mankind in some detail in *Romans 3*, when he says—"What then? are we (Jews) better than they? (Gentiles). No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"—the glory of God as represented in the perfection of Adam—*Rom. 3: 9-12, 23*. How beautifully, then, does the Apostle reveal God's plan of salvation in verses 24-26—"Being justified freely by his (God's) grace"—there was no obligation on God's part to do anything for the fallen human race. But God justifies freely "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (mercy seat) through faith in his blood . . . To declare his (God's) righteousness: that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

The helplessness of mankind apart from God's intervention is again revealed in *Rom. 5: 6-8*—"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Returning to our text in *2 Cor. 5: 19*, we read—"God WAS in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Does this mean that long before Paul's day and before Christ's first advent God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself? Yes, it means just that. How do we know? We are helped in determining this by reference to our Lord's pre-human existence with the Father, in *Prov. 8: 22*—"The LORD (Jehovah) possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old." Then in verse 30 from the Revised Standard Version we read—"I was beside him, like

a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always."

It was foreknown to God that His human creation would fall in the Garden of Eden. No doubt He conferred with His only begotten Son in that distant past, for God determined to reconcile the world unto Himself at that early stage, in His plan, through the willing sacrifice of His dear Son, for we read in Rev. 13: 8 from the R.S.V., that Christ was "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world." God knew that all mankind would be condemned to death in Adam, and that His only begotten Son would delight to do His will and come down to earth to perfect manhood and pay the sacrifice on behalf of Adam and all mankind. Then, amazing as it may seem, the Apostle says in Eph. 1: 4, 5—"He (God) hath chosen us (the Church) in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world . . . Having predestinated us unto sonship by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." This was God's good pleasure to take "many sons to glory", to be Christ's Bride, and all this was formulated in God's plan "before the foundation of the world." So we see "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself", even in that distant past.

Also, God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself was revealed shortly after the fall of man in the words of the Lord, that "the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head." That must have been a ray of hope to Adam. Then, throughout the period prior to the Flood and since during the Patriarchal and Jewish Ages, God in Christ has been reconciling selected individuals unto Himself, preparing them for the work of the kingdom on earth. These, the Apostle Paul esteemed very highly, describing them as a "cloud of witnesses" whom the followers of Christ can well take as an example of faithful obedience to the will of God—Heb. 12: 1.

In 1 Cor. 10: 1-4, Paul, writing in respect of the children of Israel in their wilderness experiences, says—"they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." Drinking of the water from the smitten rock by Israel pictured partaking of Christ. God was thus picturing reconciling the world unto Himself, in that early time, prior to the actual sacrifice of His dear Son.

In 2 Cor. 5 the great condescension on God's part in providing the redemption, and Christ's delight to do the Father's will, to endure the cross for us "while we were yet sinners" is beautifully expressed in verse 14—"For the love of Christ constraineth us". The word "constraineth" means, "to draw, to control, to hold together"—to hold together by the bonds of love of a most intimate nature. As we have it expressed again—"For as many as are **led** by the spirit of God"—not forced, but led or constrained by God's spirit—"they are the sons of God."—Rom. 8: 14.

The constraining love of Christ in reconciling us to God is also well expressed by the Apostle Peter—"If so be ye have **tasted** that the Lord is gracious"—1 Pet. 2: 3. Yes, we have tasted of His blessings in the deep realisation of His constraining love, as the Apostle continues in our verse 14—"Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." Yes, indeed, the necessity for His death for all, proves that all were in great need of His wonderful sacrifice. Then, verse 15—"And that he died for all, that they which live (those who are now living in Him by faith in His sacrifice, and receiving the new spiritual life through the begetting of the holy spirit) should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." How well this is expressed by Paul's own example—"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me"—Gal. 2: 20.

From verse 18 in 2 Cor. 5 the Apostle continues—"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." The meaning of the word "reconciled" is most helpful. It means—"To change mutually, to compound a difference." "God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ"—He has brought about a change mutually in His relationship to us, and we to Him, because of His providing Jesus as our Saviour, and we accepting our Lord as our own personal Redeemer. Thus God has "compounded a difference"—we are now brought into the family of God; we are changed mutually—God to us, and we to God, from our previous state in the world. This happy condition is well revealed again by the words of Jesus to His devoted followers—"And I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God"—John 16: 26, 27. What a lovely, mutual relationship is here shown—"The Father himself loveth you", which has the same meaning as "God hath reconciled us to himself, by Jesus Christ."

We find a lovely supporting thought in Rom. 5: 10 from the same Apostle—"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Do we note the beautiful way Paul is teaching us here? While we were enemies we were willing to be mutually changed—we were at heart yearning to be reconciled to God—and by our responding to God's drawing, this reconciling has been accomplished by our accepting Jesus fully as our Saviour. Then, further, "much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." This means we have the new life of Christ in us, by full consecration—"we are saved by his life"—for the heavenly

calling. In other words—"Christ in you, the hope of glory." This thought we have beautifully revealed again from the Apostle—"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory"—Col. 3: 4. This is the lovely at-one-ment between the members of Christ's body, the Heavenly Father Himself, and our dear Redeemer. "Christ who is **our life**"—Yes, indeed "we shall be saved by his life"—Christ's spiritual life in us.

The Apostle continues in Rom. 5: 11—"And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." It is interesting and helpful to find that the Greek word translated "atonement" is the same as that translated "reconciliation" in 2 Cor. 5: 18, to which we now return, and read, that after God has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, Paul continues—"And hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." Does this mean that after being reconciled to God, with the life of Christ in us, we are then given a part in the great work of reconciliation? It means just that! The Greek word translated "reconciliation" and "atonement" means — "a thorough change, that is, restoration to the divine favor." To be entrusted with this ministry of restoration to the divine favor, then, really is something special, as the following verse 19 explains—"To wit (namely) that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Does this mean that those who are reconciled to God are expected to go out and try to convert the world? No, not that, but it does mean this grand message of reconciliation will be upon the lips of all who are reconciled to God, to seek and find those whom the Lord our God shall call. God has given unto us the word of reconciliation to use it; He wants those whom He is drawing to be reconciled to Him now through Jesus Christ, because He is drawing to Jesus the remaining members of the body of Christ.

This privilege of having the word of reconciliation committed to us is further emphasized in verse 20 in 2 Cor. 5—"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." The work of an ambassador is well known. Various nations send out ambassadors to other countries to represent them. This is the wonderful work that God's reconciled people now have the privilege of doing. They are His representatives, to speak for Him, to act for Him, to witness in every way possible for Him, as Jesus instructed His disciples—"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"—Matt. 5: 14, 16.

But what about God reconciling the world unto

Himself, as stated in our text? Humanly speaking, this may seem impossible, but with God all things are possible. In Acts 17: 22-30 we have a wonderful record of Paul's sermon on Mars' Hill. Apparently there were scores of monuments and altars erected there to various heathen gods. In case any god had been overlooked the inhabitants had one designated—"To the Unknown God." What an opportunity that was for Paul! It permitted him to proclaim—"Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." What a wonderful message he gave! This very God whom they ignorantly worshipped was the great Creator of all; He was the Lord of the Universe, and dwells not in temples made with hands, but in the temples of His own people—those whom He has been reconciling to Himself during all the Gospel Age in particular.

Verse 30 states—"The times of this ignorance (manifested in the heathen worship) God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." Does this mean that all mankind are expected to repent in the present life? No, indeed. When Paul preached on Mars' Hill, that was the beginning of the opportunity for all men to repent. Previously, in Jesus' ministry, He said—"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Paul's explanation of the Gentiles being invited to hear the "word of reconciliation" is found in Acts 13: 44-46—"Lo, we turn to the Gentiles." And so, "God now commandeth all men every where to repent"—beginning with "as many as the Lord our God shall call" throughout this Gospel Age—those reconciled to God through faith in Christ.

But God's reconciliation of the world does not stop there. No, indeed, we read on in verse 31—"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." It will be seen that God has set aside at least 3,000 years for all men to repent—2,000 years of the Gospel Age, when God reconciles unto Himself those who have faith in Him through Christ, and another 1,000 years for the instruction and blessing of the obedient of all the families of the earth in the Millennial Age.

In John's Gospel 1: 10-12 we have a record of what happened at our Lord's first advent. "He came unto his own (Israel) and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." What happened to those who received Him not is well explained in Romans 11—"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid . . . God hath not cast away (fully) his people which he foreknew . . . What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath

(Continued on page 8.)

PEOPLES PAPER

AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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Extracts from Correspondence

Dear Christian Friends—Would you please send me your booklets, "Where are the Dead?", "Israel in History and Prophecy" and "Christ's Return." I thought your article—"Will Christ Appear as a Man at His Second Advent?" very interesting and enlightening. I have enclosed a donation and stamps to help postage. Thanking you kindly, with Christian greetings.

Dear Friends—Please find enclosed \$6.00 for your "Peoples Paper", I find very helpful in reading and trust you will send them to me. I also would like to say that I hope your work is rewarding to you, as it is to me every Sunday on radio when I tune in. I remain, Yours truly.

Berean Bible Institute, Dear Sirs—I must apologise for not writing to you before this. It has been a pleasure to receive your undenominational "Peoples Paper" for the past seven years, and, yes, I desire it to be continued. We lost our fourth son almost twenty years old, nine years ago. He was one of four C.M.F. members who drowned while on an exercise, and I have found great comfort in the things of God and His love, and these "Papers" have often proved just what I needed at different times. As one gets older it is wonderful to know God as our Father in heaven, and His Son Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and Leader . . . and I must say "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." I am enclosing \$5.00. Yours in Christ.

Dear Friends—I have indeed appreciated the visits of the "Peoples Paper" these many years, also other items of news of your work in proclaiming the good news of God's plan for the world of mankind. Please find enclosed order. With sincere Christian regards and thank you.

Dear Sir—Many thanks for the "Paper" which I have received. I would be grateful if you could note my change of address. I am enclosing \$5.00 donation towards expenses, re postage. Thanking you, Yours truly.

The Editor, "Peoples Paper", Dear sir—Thank you so much for sending me your "Paper". I love to read it. I am glad to enclose \$2.00 as my annual subscription. Thanks again.

Frank and Ernest, Dear Sirs—I usually attend a church service on Sunday mornings from 10 a.m. so do not often listen to your broadcast. However, last Sunday I stayed home and heard

Part 3 of "Life After Death" and found it very interesting. I would therefore like to read the first two parts on this important subject and shall be obliged if you would forward them, or rather, all three to me . . . I am enclosing \$1.00 for postage and a small contribution towards the cost of your broadcasts. Yours faithfully.

The above are a few quotations from correspondence received recently, and it is encouraging to note the desire of readers of our "Peoples Paper" to assist towards the greatly increased postage now operating for the distribution of our "Paper". It has been decided to retain the subscription price of 85c per annum, but to cover the postage costs from the General Tract Fund, to which many of our friends contribute, in the service of the Lord and His truth.

From now on despatch of our "Peoples Paper" throughout Australia will be by letter post at 18c per issue, which means \$1.08 per year for postage alone. Two copies can also be sent at the letter rate. By printed matter postage the cost is 20c for all countries, including Australia, for one copy or up to three copies. Our friends can assist by asking for 3 copies and distribute to others who may appreciate the messages, and perhaps could be encouraged to subscribe and receive their copies under the one cover. We are not discouraged by the increased costs of both printing and postage, well knowing that in this end of the age these and many more difficulties are to be expected, but which the Lord is able and will overrule for good in the interests of His people.

No Continuing City

(Contributed Address)

ONE of the most challenging of all New Testament Scriptures is that found in the second epistle of Peter, chapter 3, where the Apostle Peter asks the very searching question—"What manner of persons ought we to be?"

The context of this question is his answer to those who say—"Where is the promise of Christ's second coming?" He points out that God is long-suffering and His purposes go on in keeping with His own long-range designs. Nevertheless, the end of this present evil world must surely come so as to make way for the new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Read 2 Peter 3: 9-14. If this was a pertinent question in the apostle's day, how much more urgent today. We can see clearly how events around about us are all shaping up to the close of this age—events that so wonderfully match up with what God's Word has foretold. There certainly never was a time when the various prophecies of Scripture about the end of the Gospel Age have been so simultaneously apparent.

And so, the apostle asks you and me—what manner of persons ought we to be, and then he points out those areas of life that need our constant attention. Firstly, there is the present day to day task, the keeping up of what the Authorized Version translates as all holy conversation and godliness; secondly, the importance of keeping our eyes and our hopes forward and upward—looking for and hastening unto the day of God and the ushering in of His Kingdom of peace and righteousness.

If we believe then that we are living in the time when all these earthly arrangements will soon in fact be dissolved, what do the Scriptures tell us of these days, if indeed they say anything at all. After all, even the last book of the New Testament was written nearly 1900 years ago. But, no, we find, as always, God's Word is ever new, ever relevant, not only in its general all-time teaching, but in its specific messages for each generation.

Three passages in particular invite our attention, and we find all of them so apt and fitting to our time. For these tell us not only of conditions in the world generally, but of conditions in religious circles also. All three passages point out the need for self-examination and daily care, for we see from the Scriptures how intense and subtle will be the tests and deceptions of the last days. Events about us in the world today confirm and strengthen the force of the warnings and exhortations of the inspired Word of God.

One passage that very accurately describes our times is that found in the third chapter of Paul's second letter to Timothy. This speaks of perilous times in the last days and the word here translated "perilous" is elsewhere rendered "fierce" (like a wild animal) in many ways this is very true of our age. Many evils that have in the past been present but to some extent suppressed by public opinion and moral standards, now have free rein under the name of progress, maturity or liberation. Read 2 Tim. 3: 1-5. There are 19 separate charges here describing every kind of ungodliness. Without going into each charge individually, it is clear that Paul's warning here embraces the very widespread worldly characteristics of greed, selfishness, lawlessness, rejection of all authority and feverish pursuit of so-called pleasure. These are all contrary to "holy conversation and godliness" and if even entertained by believers will quickly lead to that empty form of godliness that the apostle also condemns.

Mercifully, these characteristics are not as yet universal, but we can see them encroaching steadily on our society as a reading of any daily newspaper will show.

From the believer's viewpoint, the most potentially dangerous if he is unwary, is that "form of godliness that denies the power thereof" and the apostle's words in the next chapter warn

further of trends in religious circles. Read 2 Tim. 4: 3-5.

Though there are still many seeking to preach and to practise the way of full obedience and sacrifice, there is always a temptation to accommodate with popular ways and ideas, to water down or eliminate the requirement of separateness.

In many minds today, the living of a "good life" of service to others is equated with Christianity. Such conduct, of course, becomes any Christian, but this is not the essence of true discipleship which deals first and foremost with the changed heart and the new mind, the way of sacrifice and singleness of purpose. This is a very real and subtle temptation to those unskilled in God's Word, and we can be sympathetic towards those so misled.

True belief demands true and full commitment of life in every aspect, full submission to the power of God's holy spirit to guide and direct. This calls for sacrifice of self, denial of personal preference and ambition, so that these will not hinder full service to God.

The Scriptures accurately describe the Christian life as a narrow way—a way of pressure and of trial. How subtle is the temptation to take an easier road where to all appearances the Christian way is being followed, but there is no power—no effectiveness, no fruit.

This is characteristic of present efforts to unite the various religions of the world by such as the World Council of Churches, which tries to make room for all types and manners of religion. God's Word is abundantly clear that there is only one Name by which men must be saved, only one true and living way.

Such an organization in itself is surely one of the signs of our times—the gathering together of the religious heavens. God's Word teaches just the opposite—the need is for separating one's self away from all man-made institutions to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. All such institutions, however well intended, however good, are among those things that are to be dissolved—broken up. Ultimately, anything other than individual reliance on Jesus Christ must fail.

Passing on from Paul's forecast of latter day conditions, we come to our Saviour's own words in Matt. 24: 24. These no longer refer to worldly allurements, but to intense deceptions aimed at believers by the great deceiver of mankind. These dangers are so great that they threaten even the very elect, not just newcomers and babes in Christ. So there is urgent need to test all such things by the yardstick of Scripture.

Some tests given by the apostle John are found in 1 John 4: 2, 3—spirits that confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh and 1 John

2: 22, 23—spirits that deny that Jesus is the Christ, and by Paul in 1 Tim. 6: 3, 4—those who consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Gal. 1: 7—those who pervert the Gospel.

The writer to the Hebrews further tells us that believers must go on and develop in their understanding of God's Word and His will. By constant exercise of their faculties under the holy spirit's guidance, they will be enabled to distinguish between good and evil. No matter how apparently good the source, all teachings and all practices of men must be thoroughly tested by the standards of God's Word. We need to search the Scriptures daily, whether these things be so.

One of the great manifestations of this time is the so-called charismatic movement with its emphasis on tongues and healings. These are drawing away numbers of quite keen students of the Bible who in turn become extremely keen in their promotion of these ideas to the detriment of all other doctrines. There is a need to be on guard against any over-stressed teaching for it seems to be a characteristic of all such cults, whatever direction they take, that this new thing overshadows and over-rides all else and dominates every discussion.

In our own witness for what we hold dear, we must heed the apostle's warning in 2 Tim. 2: 24 "The man of God must not strive." Some striving for truth is, of course, quite proper, but not the belligerent sort—gentleness and meekness are the keynotes.

Many believers are disturbed today over these modern cults in their various guises and we need always to be ready with a word in season from God's Word. There are indeed lonely and worried hearts to cherish as the days are passing by.

These spectacular manifestations seem to fit the thought of the great signs and wonders of Matt. 24: 24. Our concentration, as always, needs to be in building up of faith, not on the basis of visible things but on the sure Word of God, upon His promises and the blessings He has given us. Not on the "extra" blessings some claim, but on full submission to whatever is His will. Signs and wonders pass away, the three things that last are faith, hope, love, and the greatest of these is love—for love never fails.

A further clear warning of our time and conditions in the religious world is found in Rev. 3: 14-18, the familiar message to Laodicea. The features of this church are indifference and complacency, wealth and self-satisfaction. Regrettably this well describes religious society in the Western World today, but perhaps there is also a warning to us not to become carried away with the abundant blessings of truth which we have received. What is needed is the continuing, humble, teachable disposition, coupled with de-

votion to the true riches. This must always be kept up by every would-be follower of the Master, and pride excluded.

The essential individuality of the Gospel call shines out in contrast to this barren church. "If any man hear my voice, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me." We do not go to a particular place to find the Saviour, for it is not in buildings or in groups, as groups, that He deigns to dwell, but in each humble, ready heart. But having met Him, then how necessary is fellowship of kindred minds for building up and growth in grace.

As we have seen, the consecrated believer has to live and serve his Lord in a world where Christian values are being watered down and eroded—where evils under the guise of "new morality", emancipation and liberation and so on are gaining wide acceptance. Having come to know something of the true liberty that is in Christ Jesus, the believer is of course not against any extension of real liberty. But just as the new morality is largely the old immorality in new clothes, so much of the so-called liberty of today must inevitably lead to bondage to new task-masters. Only the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ can of course bring real world-wide freedom, for the first great necessity is freedom from the guilt and power of sin. This freedom has already been purchased by our Saviour's blood, and is even now the privilege of His people.

This is not to discredit the many noble things that still do survive, and the wonderful advances and opportunities of our age. But the apostle Peter tells us that all worldly arrangements and man-made institutions are to be dissolved or broken up. And it is in this context that he asks what manner of persons ought we to be? for as the writer to the Hebrews says—"Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come"—Heb. 13: 14.

Again, Paul writing to Philippi reminds that church that our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ who shall change the body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body—Phil. 3: 20, 21. And the apostle John further reassures all believers that "When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is"—1 John 3: 2.

The word "conversation" in Phil. 3: 20 implies citizenship; like the heroes of faith we are to be "strangers and pilgrims" in the present world looking for another city of God's building. So our conduct which is what the word "conversation" in 2 Pet. 3: 11 really means, must be such as is worthy of citizens of a heavenly city.

What manner of persons we ought to be revolves firstly about what is termed "all holy conversation and godliness"; that is to say, sep-

arateness from worldly ideals and aims to the will and service of God. Not just holy conversation is required, but all holy conversation, stressing the need for separateness in all circumstances, in all places and at all times. There is also the need for consistency in every part of our lives—though mankind in general is quite inconsistent, yet this is the point on which it will judge believers. The weapons of our warfare in Ephes. 6 must be worn or carried at all times, lest at any time we be caught off guard and bring discredit to our Master's name and cause another to stumble. The words of the Apostle John remind us "Who-so keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected—hereby know we that we are in him. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light and there is no occasion of stumbling in him"—1 John 2: 5, 10.

If we truly love God's Word and keep our Saviour's commandments, there will be nothing permitted in our lives to trip up another, no stumbling block or "scandal" which is the actual Greek word used here.

Holiness as used in Scripture means separateness, not for isolation but for usefulness and service, like the vessels of the Jewish temple. It means the quality of being different, which showed so clearly in the early apostles, for though the crowd saw that Peter and John were unlearned men, yet they "took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus"—Acts 4: 13. It is said that people are known by the company they keep—is our friendship with our Saviour such a sign to those about us?

Peter expands on this idea of separateness in conduct in 1 Pet. 1: 13-15. The mind and will must be disciplined, must be always ready for action—there is need for soberness, not joylessness, but calm, hopeful rejoicing in doing the will of God, after the example of Jesus Christ.

Coupled with this attention to daily conduct and witness is the necessity for looking ever forward to the hope set before us. For there to be any achievement, there must be a goal and this especially applies to the Christian life, being variously expressed as 1. Setting the affections on things above. 2. Running with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus. 3. Pressing toward the mark (the goal) of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 11 recounts the exploits of the Old Testament heroes of faith who saw the promises of God afar off, and in John's Gospel, of Abraham, who by faith rejoiced to see our Lord's day. These all had a light to guide them on, even though a long way off. In our day, by faith we can see the dawning of the new day of God coming ever nearer and nearer. So many signs about us tell us that the kingdoms of this world are shortly to become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.

Among these signs are the conditions and events in the world so clearly foretold in the passages previously quoted—which at the same time serve as messages of warning and caution, but also as rays of hope.

The thought of "hasting unto that day" seems strange at first since no activity (or lack of it) on our part will speed up or slow down God's plans and purposes. But rather the hastening points to a need for even greater attention to our own preparedness and watchfulness, as we see that day approaching, for laying aside anything that might hinder or delay our progress along the Christian way.

There is a note of urgency here, there can be no dozing off along the way—"The night is far spent, the day is at hand—let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day"—Rom. 13: 12, 13.

As mature believers, as true lovers of our Saviour and of God's Word, the various enticements of the world should not unduly affect us as such. But our adversary, the devil, is still able to put forward subtle temptations if we become lax or unwary.

The wonderful light with which we have been blessed in these last days requires the continual accompaniment of true humility and the ornament of the meek and gentle spirit to the utter exclusion of pride or occasion of stumbling to others.

On the other hand, while we cannot rejoice in the evils of this present age and the worsening moral and social conditions of today, yet the way in which they so clearly fulfil God's more sure Word of prophecy is a cause for rejoicing. For we recognize that they foreshadow that great day of blessing to follow earth's night of weeping. When "all those things that can be shaken will be removed and only those things which cannot be shaken may remain"—Heb. 12: 27.

We live in wonderful and terrible times—what manner of persons indeed then ought you and I to be? Firstly, We ought to be such as bring honour and glory to the name of our Heavenly Father and His dear Son, by our daily lives and conduct. Secondly, We ought to be such as show by every thought and word and deed that we delight to do God's will. Thirdly, We ought to be such as look for and love the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Melbourne Christmas Convention

The brethren of the Melbourne Class extend a cordial invitation to all friends able to attend their Annual Convention to be held this year (D.V.) on December 25th, 26th, 27th and 28th, in the Masonic Hall, 254 Swan Street, Richmond. Further information from the Class secretary—Mr. J. B. Hiam, 16 Kennedy St., South Oakleigh, Victoria, 3167.

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obtained it, and the rest were blinded . . . I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation (for the heavenly calling) is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy . . . For if the casting away of them (Israel, from the heavenly calling) be the reconciling of the world"—the offer to the Gentiles to make up the Bride of Christ—"what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"—Rom. 11: 1, 2, 7, 11, 15. The Apostle shows that the receiving of Israel back into God's favor will indeed be "life from the dead" for them, from verse 25 in this 11th chapter of Romans—"Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in"—until the Bride of Christ is complete. "And so all Israel shall be saved (for the earthly inheritance): as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

The receiving back of Israel into the favor of God after the Bride of Christ is complete will be the real beginning by God of reconciling the masses of humanity unto Himself through Christ. As Christ's followers have had the privilege of using the "word of reconciliation" during this Gospel Age to find other members of Christ's Bride by witnessing the glad message to those drawn of God to Christ, so in the Kingdom Age this work with Christ will continue from above and result in all the obedient of the whole world being reconciled to God, following their resurrection to life on the earth. This complete reconciliation of all the obedient of humanity was well indicated by Jesus when He said—"Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration (the general resurrection day for humanity) when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"—Matt. 19: 28.

That the Lord will also use Israel as a guide and means of enlightenment to the nations of the world is also revealed over and over again in the prophecies, such as Micah 4: 1-4—" . . . And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain (kingdom) of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion (Christ and His Church) and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (the earthly centre of the kingdom). And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every one under his vine and under his fig tree; and none

shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it." Prophecies of this kind are to be fulfilled completely in the wonderful kingdom of God. So this great Plan of God was formed before the foundation of the world; Christ was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world; the Church was predestinated, called in God's plan before the foundation of the world, that they should be associated with Christ in the stupendous and glorious work of God in reconciling the world of mankind unto Himself.

Convention News

A wonderful time of Christian Fellowship was experienced again this year at the third Nambour Convention. As well as being the largest we have had to date, we believe it was the best. Friends attended from many parts of Australia—from Perth, W.A., Melbourne, Geelong, Canberra, as well as the Queensland friends from Brisbane, Toowoomba, Harveys Siding and Hervey Bay. We feel that we were greatly blessed by the Lord in His sending so many brethren to have fellowship with us over the two days of the Convention.

We at Nambour are few in number and somewhat isolated from the other brethren. We therefore fully appreciate the great privilege that was bestowed upon us in being able to meet with so many others of like precious faith who are walking the same narrow way, and talking together of those things which are so dear to our hearts.

Ten addresses were delivered, as well as three studies ably conducted by the visiting brethren, the studies being 1 Peter 1: 3-7; 1 Thes. 5: 1-10, and a study on the Gospel Age Harvest. A Testimony Meeting was also held. Many lovely messages were received from the various Classes as well as from individual friends, all of which were warmly appreciated. Our Christian love was sent to them from the Convention with the Scripture message from 1 Thes. 3: 12, 13. Many lovely hymns were sung, accompanied by a Brother on the piano accordion.

The Convention closed with the Love Feast and the singing of "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love", and "God be with you till we meet again". Then we all went home feeling that it was good that we came up to the house of the Lord.

Frank and Ernest on 2TM Tamworth

The Frank and Ernest Dialogues are now being broadcast over 2TM Tamworth on 1290 Kc, Tuesdays at 10.10 p.m. Good reception has been reported from Nambour, Queensland, which means that a large area will be covered, possibly also including Sydney. Friends are asked to make these broadcasts known in their areas where reception is possible.