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## The Gospel Preached in all the World — Then Shall the End Come

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye and teach all nations.” “But ye shall receive power, after that the holy spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Matt. 24:14; 28:18, 19; Acts 1:8.)

Taking up this subject the three Scriptures above quoted will be reviewed first of all. Examining the first part of Matt. 24:14, most people are well acquainted with the meaning of the word “gospel”, for by common use it carries the thought of a good message, or glad tidings of the kingdom. This means hope of salvation from the sin and death condition which commenced with the disobedience of our first parents in the Garden of Eden.

Early in our Lord’s ministry He used the term “the kingdom of heaven”, as found in Matt. 4:17-20. This was when Jesus commenced to select those who were to be His followers indeed, as we read —”And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.” In these verses it is clear that Jesus was inviting Peter and Andrew to become prospective members of the kingdom of heaven, and He implied that He would train them to become “fishers of men” for that heavenly kingdom. However, as it is also clearly stated in the Bible that there will be an earthly phase of the kingdom, we can rightly assume from Matt. 24:14 where our Lord said “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world”, that Jesus meant both phases of the kingdom would be preached or proclaimed in all the world, in due time. The Lord’s ministry with the message He was proclaiming was not restricted to the heavenly phase, for the kingdom is to be both heavenly and earthly—for spiritual beings and for earthly beings.

Then we notice in Matt. 24:14 there is a particular feature of the preaching or proclaiming of the gospel—that it is to be for a witness to all nations. What does “for a witness” mean? The word “witness” is a good translation of the Greek, and it means to give testimony or evidence. The preaching of the gospel of the kingdom for a witness means to give testimony of the glad news that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for all mankind, and salvation is provided through faith in His great sacrifice for all who

accept Him as their Saviour. This is the glad news of the gospel, proclaimed particularly from our Lord's first advent, when the "so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." (Heb. 2:3.)

This prophecy of our Lord's of giving witness to the gospel of the kingdom does not indicate how that witness would be received by all nations in the world. It has been claimed over the years that this preaching of the gospel to all nations was for the conversion of the world to Christ's gospel. But that was not what the Lord really implied. Rather, His true gospel was to be a **witness** to all nations throughout the Gospel Age, irrespective of how that witness would be received. The fact that Jesus said to Peter and Andrew,—"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men", showed that the preaching of the gospel by Christ's servants would mean a selective work would be undertaken, with the message of the gospel as bait, to attract to the cause of Christ. The message, the glad tidings, would have such an appeal to certain people that they would embrace it almost at once. That was the case with some of Jesus' disciples; a few recognised this perfect Saviour almost immediately, through His message of salvation.

In one of our Lord's parables, in Matt. 13:47, 48, we have a clear indication of the selective work which has been going on all this Gospel Age. We read—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away." Later on we may have opportunity to see what happens to the "fish" cast back into the sea. Just now we are interested in the good fish, which pictured certain of mankind selected as prospective members for the kingdom of heaven—those who are attracted by the message of the gospel since our Lord's first advent.

The second of our selected texts in Matt. 28:18, 19, records the words of Jesus as He was about to leave His disciples and ascend to heaven. He said—"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye and teach all nations." The margin reads, "make disciples or Christians of all nations",—meaning "out of, or from all nations." Jesus did not commission His disciples to convert all nations, but make Christians by the message which had been given to them, which they had learned from the Lord for about 3 years. This agrees with the words of the risen Lord during one of His appearances, after His resurrection, in John 20:21—"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." The Father had sent Christ into the world, He had given the sacrifice for sin, He was now risen from the dead and was about to leave them,—"So send I you." They were to represent their Lord in a comparatively hostile world, but they would be armed with the spirit of God. They were equipped and prepared how to present the message of the gospel, not to force it on anyone, but as a witness to find those who were worthy, those who would rejoice in the same message which had attracted the disciples to the Lord Himself. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

The third selected text in Acts 1:8, records the final instructions of the risen Lord to His disciples prior to His ascension to heaven,—"And ye shall receive power, after that the holy spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." We notice the gradual widening out of the witness to be undertaken. First of all the witness was in Jerusalem, and this was well impressed on the Day of Pentecost with the outpouring of the holy spirit. Jesus said they should wait for the promise of the Father "which ye have heard of me." This was the commission, the holy spirit coming down into their hearts, thrilling them with the true message of the gospel. Various tongues were used to communicate the gospel to foreigners. We find it quite understandable why tongues were used at that time with many nationalities there present to receive the message of the kingdom. How different is the position today when we hear of tongues being used. When everyone can understand the language, it is not the Lord's way to make a show before people. This is one of Satan's counterfeits. It was necessary in those early days when they did not

even have the Bible.

The witness was extended, in accordance with Jesus' words, as shown in Acts 8:1, 4,—”And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.” That is just what the Lord said would happen, and desired to happen. The disciples were not intimidated with the persecutions, but “went every where preaching the word.” Throughout the Gospel Age the witnessing of the gospel of the kingdom has continued throughout one country after another, until with the invention of printing and the establishment of societies for the printing of the Bible, the witnessing to the gospel of Christ has widened until today it is claimed that this witness has been extended to the uttermost part of the earth. This does not mean that everybody has heard the message, but rather the witness has been given to all parts of the earth.

Combining the thoughts of the three particular texts used, we have clear evidence of the responsibility of Christ's servants who have had the witnessing of the gospel of the kingdom committed to their trust. Our Lord outlined the dangers to be encountered by His servants, and also the privileges of being entrusted to bear His message of the gospel when He gave the particular words of wisdom to the twelve apostles as recorded in Matthew 10, from verse 16. “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves . . . And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.” The word “testimony” translates the same Greek word as does the word “witness”, so we see that in the persecutions endured, the testimony given would be as a witness for the Lord's cause. Verses 19 and 20 continue,—”But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” Isn't that lovely? What a comfort and support such words must have been; the spirit of the Father would be with them; they were not to be anxious. The same spirit of the Father that was with Christ would be with them. “As the Father hath sent me, so send I you.”

Further verses in Matthew 10 show what is required of Christ's servants who are worthy to become “fishers of men.” The promise also is given in verse 32,—”Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father in heaven.” Who would not delight to bear the Lord's name and witness for Him and His truth, in view of this wonderful assurance from the Master. Our Lord also confirmed this promise in His message to the church in Sardis, in Rev. 3:5,—”He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”

This is a lovely promise, given by the Lord as He walked amidst the candlesticks (the churches), supervising the work being accomplished by those who walk in the steps of their Master throughout their earthly course.

Another text of special interest in connection with the witness for the Lord and His gospel of the kingdom, in the time of the Apostle Paul, is his message to Timothy, in 2 Tim. 1:8,—”Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.” In this verse the word “testimony” is also from the same Greek word as is translated “witness” when referring to the gospel being preached in all the world “for a witness.” Witnessing for Jesus and witnessing for His gospel are closely allied. This is beautifully expressed in the vision of Rev. 20:4, where John says he saw, the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.” These were not literally beheaded, necessarily, but had committed their whole lives into Christ's care, to witness for Jesus and the Word of God, taking Christ as their Head. The vision is of those who had been successful in this, for they are

shown as being worthy to live and reign with Christ a thousand years in His kingdom, to bless all mankind.

Coming to the latter part of Matt. 24:14, we find that after the gospel has been preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, “then shall the **end** come.” What “end” did Jesus refer to here? The meaning of the Greek word from which our English word “end” is translated carries the thought of “to set out for a definite point or goal; the point aimed at as a limit; (by implication) the conclusion of an act or state.” Some other Scriptures where this Greek word “telos” is used are helpful. In Matt. 24:12, 13, we read—”Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the **end**, the same shall be saved.” In Heb. 3:6, 14, we read—”But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the **end**. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the **end**.” Also in 1 Pet. 1:9, the verse reads,—”Receiving the **end** of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” Therefore, in Matt. 24:14, we conclude the meaning to be, that when the gospel of the kingdom has been preached in all the world, for a **witness** to all nations, to select all the members of Christ’s church, then shall the **end** come for the rewarding of these true followers of the Master, in the close of the Gospel Age, in readiness for the Kingdom Age to follow.

We should be helped further in this matter by the vision given to John, in Rev. 7:1-3, which refers to the sealing of God’s servants,—”I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree . . . Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.” World events surely indicate that the “four winds” of trouble are not yet allowed to blow full blast upon the present order of society, although there are various troubles world-wide. “The earth” represents the present order of society; “the sea” pictures the restless masses of humanity, and “the trees” represent the nations generally. Today the last members of the “servants of God” are being “sealed in their foreheads” as well as in their hearts, in preparation for the heavenly kingdom.

It is obvious the “winds” are still held back; from time to time over recent years it seemed the winds would be let loose. We are surely living in the time of the fulfilment of this vision.

What may we expect when all the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads? Our Lord gave us a guide in this matter in John 9:4, when He said —”I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.” The Lord knew the time would come when He could not work; He knew He would be apprehended and would become the “Lamb of God” when His work on earth would be finished. He was also speaking prophetically of our day. The “night” will come when God’s servants will be unable to work, but that time is not yet. There is still opportunity to proclaim His Word, to witness to the gospel of the kingdom, when one here and there still appreciates the message. These see through the darkness of the present evil world that God has a plan of salvation for every emergency.

Regarding the symbol of “trees” picturing nations, we have our Lord’s words when He spoke of the “fig tree” to picture Israel in Luke 21:29-31. (See also Luke 13:6-9.) Not only did Christ refer to the “fig tree”, but all the “trees”—all the nations, coming to life, and stirring the world with their claims and counter-claims. What we see going on in the world today tells us that the kingdom of God is nigh. This is something for which to look forward, following the devastating time of trouble. The prophet Nahum also mentioned the shaking of the nations by the symbol of “trees”, when he declared,—”The chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his (God’s) preparation (the preparation for the kingdom) and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken”, Nahum 2:3. Also in Nahum 1:59 we have the whirlwind of trouble shown in symbolical language,—”The mountains (kingdoms) quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is

burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein ... What do ye imagine against the Lord? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time." Rebellion shall not rise up a second time in God's creation. God has determined, once and for all, that the great demonstration of rebellion with the sinfulness of sin, over about 6,000 years, will be sufficient to induce all worthy of life to accept salvation on the basis of Christ's sacrifice for them. The majority of mankind will probably rejoice in this wonderful redemption when they realise what it cost to provide the salvation from the death condition.

The Apostle Paul tells us about the groaning creation waiting for deliverance, though unknowingly at the present time, in the words of Rom. 8:22, 19,—”For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. For the earnest expectation of the creature (creation) waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” Mankind are waiting for the revealing of the over-comers of the Gospel Age with Christ in the heavenly kingdom. This helps us to understand the meaning of the words in our text Matt. 24:14—”then shall the end come”,—the time when Christ's faithful church will be with Him to bless all the families of the earth, at the conclusion of the witnessing of the gospel in all the world to all nations, to find the members for the heavenly calling.

The prophet Isaiah in chapter 60 reveals how Israel will be used of God when they come back into harmony with Him, following the humbling experiences of Jacob's trouble. This is a very wonderful prophecy, showing how God's great blessings will flow out to all nations, through Israel,—”The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea (all mankind) shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.” Previously mention was made of the drag-net parable, when only the good fish were selected during the Gospel Age. Now we see from Isaiah that the “abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee”— the abundance of mankind shall be converted in the Kingdom Age when the blessings of God will be flowing out to all the families of the earth. Mankind, raised up in the general resurrection, will learn that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man. That will be the time when they will have full opportunity of accepting the Lord and by obedience to the laws of His kingdom, will rejoice in the salvation provided and gain lasting life on the restored earth.

How wonderful is God's plan for the salvation of the human family! The salvation of the Church first for the heavenly inheritance, and the world of mankind to be blessed on the restored earth throughout the kingdom age, following the great humbling in the time of trouble, all made possible through the sacrifice of Christ.

The words of the Psalmist help us also in these days of stress, when we read in Psa. 76:10,—”Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.” The

Lord will speak “Peace, be still”, to the raging masses of humanity in the time of trouble, and there will be a great calm. Mankind will know that the Lord has taken charge of earth's affairs, that Christ's kingdom is established, and nothing “shall hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain (kingdom); for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea”, [so. 11:9.

# The Man Born to be King

(See Matthew 2:1-15.)

THIS subject is certainly a most important one, and we feel that a correct understanding of our Lord's life on earth is of vital value to all of God's people who are seeking to walk in the steps of our Saviour and Redeemer.

To all who are acquainted with the birth of Jesus as the Babe of Bethlehem, His earthly mother being used to nourish and rear this Babe into boyhood, it is evident that the Heavenly Father chose this means of giving His dear Son to be the Redeemer of mankind, as being the best way in keeping with His plan of salvation for a dying human race.

We have no doubt at all that God could have sent His Son as a fully developed man, direct from heaven, had His wisdom seen that it would have been the best way; but inasmuch as Jesus came into the world, born of an earthly mother, this must be considered as the very best way, not only to accomplish God's plan of redemption, but also as the best means of conveying to the minds of earthly beings the great truth that our Saviour was the Messiah from heaven.

Supposing that Jesus had appeared suddenly in the midst of the Jewish people, as a fully developed man at the age of 30 years, and claimed to be the Messiah, the Saviour to Israel, there would have been some reason for the majority of that nation to believe that He was more than a man, and this lingering supposition would have been a great hindrance to the faith of those who longed and yearned for the Messiah, and desired to walk in His steps, in hope of the kingdom. Even as it was, *we* remember that it was difficult enough for the most sincere in Jesus' day to understand (after they had witnessed an outstanding miracle by our Lord), that He was really human. *We* call to mind the instance in Matt. 8:27—"But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

What our Lord ever sought to impress upon His disciples was the fact that the works He did, the miracles He performed, were accomplished by the power from above—not by His own bodily power. In John 14:10, we read—"The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Also in regard to His teachings, He declared—"My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John 7:16, 17.) How this helps us to understand the philosophy of the ransom—that our Lord was a corresponding price for the life of our first parent, Adam. How important it is that this truth be grasped and understood in our hearts and minds, because until we do see that our Saviour was a perfect human being, at His first advent, we cannot really and truly co-operate intelligently as members in the Body of Christ.

It was to assist the disciples of Christ in particular, we may be sure, that God sent Jesus as the babe, so that He may grow up as other children, only of course, He was a perfect child, and was not affected or influenced by the imperfections of the dying human race. God knew, of course, that some in Israel would stumble at the lowly manner in which the Saviour came into the world, and would ridicule the suggestion that He was the Messiah. No doubt many thought of Him as stated in Matt. 13:55—"Is not this the carpenter's son?" They would reason—He is just one of us; and yet, as verse 54 shows, they could not but ask—"Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?"

While, then, the lowly birth of Jesus stumbled some to conclude that He was just one of the ordinary

children in Israel, as He grew up, those in right heart condition could see that He was no ordinary man, because He was guided and directed of God so fully, and the miracles He did marked Him out as God's special messenger, even the Messiah.

However, how many sincere people today conclude that our Lord was more than a human being while on earth. Some seem to feel that it is belittling to think that our Saviour was not Divine in some way. A sincere person once wrote—"I cannot have any thing to do with teachings which tamper with the Deity of Christ." It is sad to note this attitude, for how necessary it is to really study God's Word, and not be so sure of having gained the truth in regard to any matter, that we are not open to correction, as the truths of the Scriptures are revealed to those worthy of them.

How clearly did the Apostle John explain our Lord's nature when He came as the Babe of Bethlehem. In 1 John 4:2, 3, we read—"Hereby know ye the spirit of God; every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." It is most important, surely, to understand this matter of our Lord's perfect humanity at His first advent—that He was truly the Man born to be King. In 1 Tim 2:5, 6 we read—"The man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." It is absolutely clear that our Lord gave His humanity for the life of the world--a man's life for a man's life, that He may pay the death penalty against Adam, and the race condemned to death in Adam.(See Heb. 2:9. "A little lower than the angels," was the same nature as that possessed by man in his perfection; see verses 6, 7.)

Some sincere believers who are able to grasp the fact that our Lord gave His human life in sacrifice, feel that in some way He will again appear in human form at His second advent. The truth on this matter is of equal importance, surely, as is the nature of Jesus when He came to redeem humanity; and how definitely did our Lord declare of Himself—"My flesh I will give for the life of the world." (John 6:51.) And again, in speaking to His disciples He stated—"Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye (shall) see me (in the heavenly kingdom); because I live, ye shall live also." (John 14:19.) The Apostle Paul also revealed that in His great exaltation our Lord was made in the "express image of the Father's person,"—the divine nature; while Peter adds his testimony that Christ was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened (resurrected) in spirit." (Heb. 1:3; 1 Pet. 3:18.)

Someone may feel that it is not really important to know and understand these things, but it is of great importance that we do become clear and definite on the doctrine of the ransom—the corresponding price which our Redeemer gave for the world—and also the manner of His return, so that, as members of His Body, we may be in full harmony and co-operate in all things with our Lord and Head.

When the time came for our Lord to complete His sacrifice, we find that the answers He gave to Pilate are of great instruction to us respecting His kingship and kingdom. After being questioned by Pilate, we note the answer He gave in John 18:36, 37—"My kingdom is not of this world (kosmos, order of things; this 'present evil world'); if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

The great purpose of our Lord being born as the Babe of Bethlehem was that He may become the Man, Christ Jesus, to give Himself a ransom, corresponding price, for the world of mankind. He certainly bore witness unto this truth; and every one that is of the truth (with a heart and mind for the truth), heareth the Lord's voice. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27.)

# Pure Religion

(Contributed Article).

The Epistle of James is a particularly valuable one, because it gives so much practical advice. Our text is taken from chapter 1:27—"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Before examining our text in detail, it should be helpful if we gain an overall picture of what the apostle is saying. In doing this the particular text in verse 27 has much more meaning.

The apostle begins with exhortation. In verse 2 he says—"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." He was drawing their minds away from the temptations they were experiencing, and saying, I know you have temptations, that is your life; but let us count it all joy. Then we go down to verses 9-11,—“Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich, in that he is made low; because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.” Nothing surely could be more basic than that. But note the apostle’s words in verse 12,—“But blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”

So that is the way the apostle opens up this epistle, and there is a point there also for us. It is very important for us always to exhort first and censure, if you like, later. We must have conviction of faith before we can have any constraint of action. “If any man have this hope in him, he purifieth himself.” But he must have the hope there first.

Verses 16-18 read—"Do not err (make no mistake), my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." Then verse 19, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren"; because of this, "let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." Because of his exhortation, let us do likewise. See also verses 21, 22.

In verse 26 we read—"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain." Then we have the opposite in verse 27—"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this. To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." The obligation in this verse 27 seems to spell out in detail two types of work the Christian should be doing. On the one hand we have to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. On the other hand, the Christian must keep himself unspotted from the world. What does it mean, to carry out these two sides of the question? Visiting the fatherless and widows, to us in these times might be rather meaningless. But we can take them in a purely physical sense, and in 1 Tim. 5:3-16 we have some practical advice about looking after those in the flesh who are not as fortunate as ourselves. Perhaps there is also some symbolic meaning here. In Rev. 18:7 symbolism is used; we might read verses 2 and 3 first of all,—“And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.” Then verse 7,—“How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.” Because Babylon

claims proudly that she is no widow, the thought comes to mind whether or not the true Church could be pictured as being a widow, and therefore whether

in our text in James in particular, to visit the fatherless and widows has a special implication for us to do our best to do good to all, but particularly to the household of faith.

The word “fatherless” is not quite so easy. These thoughts are presented for consideration—while the straightforward obligation of help is the prime thought, probably there may be something extra for us. The only other place where this word “fatherless” is found is John 14:18. From verse 15 Jesus said—“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that it may abide with you for ever ... I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” “Comfortless” is from the same Greek word as “fatherless” in James. So Jesus was assuring the disciples that they would not be left fatherless or without a comforter. There Jesus was talking to them in the spiritual sense and saying, you won’t have a father on earth, our Father is in heaven, but I will not leave you fatherless. We are really “fatherless” on the earth, just as much as the Church can be classified as being a “widow” on the earth.

There is no doubt that James 1:27 has first a physical implication. Referring to Gal. 6:9, 10 we read—“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” The word “especially” has the meaning in the Greek of “most” or “the greatest degree” or “particularly.” Let us do good to the greatest degree to the household of faith,—“one of the least of these My brethren.”

On the other side of the question on the text in James, we should keep ourselves unspotted from the world. When first considering this years ago, the thought came to mind that the easiest way to carry this verse into effect would be to be a lighthouse keeper. You would be separate from the rest of the world, and in this way you could quite easily be unspotted from the world. But Jesus said in His prayer to the Father,—“I pray not that thou should- est take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” John 17:15-17. It is not a physical separation from the world that is required; it is a sanctifying or renewing of the mind. “Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” “This is the will of God (concerning you), even your sanctification.” “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth.”

Regarding the way in which we may best sanctify ourselves, we read in Heb. 10:25,—“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.” The word “approaching” has various meanings, but at present we have the thought of provoking to love and to good works and not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. We are favoured in this regard, in that we can assemble ourselves together. Some people who assemble often are not as fortunate as we are because they do not have the same opportunity to make the Truth their own. They are not completely free to express what they think; they are not completely free to question any decisions made. *We* in this country are very fortunate, therefore we should realise the opportunity and take hold of it and make good. “Be ready always to give an answer to every man who asketh concerning the hope that is in you.” “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.” It is important for us to have this hope in ourselves.

In 1 Pet. 4:12 we read,—“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” This is a well known verse, and it has some application

when it comes to keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. Our trials must take place in the world, working things out in that situation. The words of the Apostle Paul in Heb. 4:15 help us to be patient in tribulations, and to persevere and keep ourselves unspotted from the world,—“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Again in Heb. 2:17, 18, with reference to our Lord, the apostle states,—“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” Thinking about that, in God’s wisdom He subjected our Lord and Master to discipline, and surely we should not be surprised at the fiery trial that is to try us.

The words of exhortation to the Ephesians by the Apostle Paul in Eph. 6:10-13 are well-known verses, but should be ever fresh and ever encouraging,—“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not (merely) against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places: Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

## Excerpt Convention Report 1930

HAVE we ever stopped to really think seriously just how the Saviour would view matters and what He would say to us were He visibly to appear in our midst in these times? Some have said, “Oh! how I wish the Master would visit us as He did with those disciples long ago; how I wish I might consult Him with regard to many questions that have so troubled me; I am sure, if the Master were right in our midst, we could soon have the burning, vexing problems and issues that have disturbed us in these recent years quickly settled.” But, brethren, is there any question, problem or difficulty before us today that the Master has not already answered in one or another of His many sayings when He was here long ago? Has He not through the spirit in the Apostolic messages dealt with all the present issues?

But still someone says, “If He were here I would like to ask Him who has charge of His Church today, and whom He has put over His people to control and direct them with power and authority.” How would Jesus reply to this question? I believe that we already have His answer to that question—My dear disciples, I have never vacated the position which the Father gave to Me in the beginning of the Age. As I then said, “One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren,” so now I say that I alone have charge of My Church, and I have never delegated authority to any man or company of men to rule over the Church or to interfere with the individual liberty of each member.

Another might ask: Master, tell us what great movement or work have you authorised your people to carry on in the earth today; what great pronouncement is there to be made in fulfilment of your will? Again we may be sure the Lord would answer in harmony with what He established as the mission of the Church when it was instituted, and that answer would be: I have not authorised any great movement or any great work to be achieved during this dispensation, for “My Kingdom is not of this world.” I remind you that in the beginning of the Age I said that My people would be scattered here and there throughout the earth. I never authorised My disciples to organise any great and wonderful work while yet in their earthly pilgrimage. Was not this the sum of the teachings of Christ and the Apostle with regard to what was authorised or expected of the faithful Church all along through the centuries until her glorification?

Another question might be: Master, will you not tell us just who and where your people are to be found in the earth today so that we may be numbered among them and thus enjoy fellowship with the true saints. We believe the Lord would answer, saying. "My followers are those who do the will of My Father in heaven; they are those who possess My spirit; they are such as are consecrated—surrendered—to My will; they are those who deny themselves and have taken up their cross to follow Me; in fact, whoever will do the will of My Father the same is My Brother, My Sister, My Mother." And, dear brethren, should not this reply of the Master be satisfactory to us? Do we not really love all who love the Lord Jesus and possess His spirit? As many as are led by the spirit of God they are the sons of God.

All our perplexities of today can be settled if we properly take them to the Lord and enquire what the spirit has long ago said unto the Church.

## Discord Precedes Harmony

It seems to me the trials and the temptations of this life are all making us fit for the life to come—building up a character for eternity. You have been in a piano manufactory; did you ever go there for the sake of music? Go into the tuning room and you will say, "My dear sir, this is a dreadful place to be in; I cannot bear it; I thought you made music here." They say, "No; we do not produce music here; we make the instruments and tune them here, and in the process much discord is forthcoming." Such is the church of God on earth. The Lord makes the instruments down here, and tunes them, and a great deal of discord is perceptible, but it is all necessary to prepare us for the everlasting harmonies up yonder.—Spurgeon.

## Steadfast, Immovable

The old Lollards were called "Holdfasts," not only because of their firmness under persecution, but of their strong grasp of the truth. Coleridge said, with a practical aptness unusual with him: "What does not withstand has no standing ground." "Hold fast, then, the form of sound words, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus."

Be modest, unostentatious in all that is your own, willing to concede everything you have a right to yield, but be scrupulous and immovable about all that is Christ's. —Selected.

### **“Songs in the Night”**

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