



Volume L1 No.1 MELBOURNE, FEBRUARY—MARCH, 1968 Price-10 Cents

Our Victorious Faith

(Convention Address)

“Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?”—John 11:40.

INTO the home of our Lord’s beloved friends at Bethany a great sorrow had come. Death had invaded the little circle and severed ties that to all appearances had been of most pleasant character. If we may accept as true the various conjectures which make Lazarus the rich young ruler who on one occasion was found inquiring the way of eternal life, we may safely conclude that this home in Bethany was one of more than ordinary comfort and refinement. The deep sorrow of the two faithful sisters would seem to reveal also that the three inmates of this home had lived together in a state of peaceful and tranquil companionship. Under such circumstances, and in view of the special love Jesus had for these three, the grief He witnessed as He approached the home and His reaction thereto, makes this incident one of great interest to us today. When the spirit of inspiration singles out an individual for more than the usual general mention, we may be sure that this peculiar individualization is deeply significant. We are therefore ready to note with appreciation the remark which was by no means incidental: “Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” (John 11:5.) The keeping of this fact before our minds will give much greater force to the helpful lessons this narrative contains for all those who “through much tribulation” are seeking to enter the Kingdom.

Here then, were dear ones who enjoyed this special place in the love and affection of Jesus, loyal hearts whose every experience would be of deep concern to Him, yet how peculiarly He seemed to act toward them in the earlier hours of their difficulty. Had we been there taking note of the sorrows of the bereaved sisters, and had we been possessed of the knowledge of His wonder-working power, would we too not have asked with a note of surprise, “Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?” The old question of how love can appear to stand aside while the blows of affliction shatter some of our fondest dreams, has been, and will continue to be, asked by burdened hearts until sorrow and sighing flee away forever. True, faith may remain unshaken in the wisdom and love of God, and heroically say, “Though he slay me yet will I trust him,” but, “frail shrinking nature” is ever prone to “cry enough” before the tribulation has accomplished its refining work. Faith will not forget that “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb. 12:6), but somehow the thought will remain, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.”- I would surely not -have had this particular trial or experienced this disturb, once of my peaceful environments, if Thy presence had *been* really with me. But where love abounds, the heart is teachable and ever ready to confess, “Thy judgments, Lord, are true and right, and brighter every day,” and in our hearts we entreat Thy patience, yea,

“Until by dint of strokes and blows,
The shapeless mass appears
Symmetric, polished, beautiful,
To stand the eternal years.”

The value of so many of the beautiful story lessons contained in the Gospels, lies in the fact that we may live them over again in our own daily lives. They are not just records of what Jesus said and did 1900 years ago, and of how certain characters reacted under the circumstances, but they are living pictures of the life we live ourselves, in which Jesus moves, and lives, and speaks, with His words of comfort, and compassionate love. How often, then, our beloved Master needs to come to us in the midst of our trials to assure us that we have not been forgotten, and to remind us afresh of the love and power vested in Himself, and perhaps to say to us as of old, “Believest thou this?” How often in our

forgetfulness of the fact that He will be with us in six troubles, and remain with us even in the seventh, we have drawn on the fulness of His patience, and again and again, perhaps as frequently as special trials have overtaken us,

He has needed to remind us that these experiences are after all but passing shadows, light afflictions which are but for a moment in present duration, but laden with great possibilities of “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

If, then, in the hours of our chastening and scourging we are listening intently, we will find that the love that met the needs that day in Bethany is as blessedly near to us with the same reassuring declaration, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Be it the open grave that has received some loved and seemingly indispensable kindred spirit, or be it the defeat of some cherished hope of a worthy character, or some effort to hold aloft the high attainments possible to the people of God, and in connection with which we had entertained great expectations only to see them swept beyond the hope of present realization, or some deep humiliation and grief of heart over our own personal failures to reveal our true self in words and acts both strong and noble—ah, then, it is He who calms our spirits with the confidence that since He is the “resurrection and the life,” all is not lost; if we will only believe we shall yet see evidences of His power which will dispel all our sorrow. All these things may be stepping stones, He will say, to higher and greater ends, for I am able to make all things work together for good to those who love My will supremely,—”Believeth thou this?”

A Very Present Help is He.

In the midst of her trouble Martha was quite prepared to ‘believe that Jesus would eventually act on her behalf.

The sad calamity had happened, and her brother had now gone beyond the hope of any present help. Sometime in the distant future all would be ‘Well. “I know he shall rise again at the last day.” But until then, she thought, she must wait for the reward of her faith. And just as Jesus must teach her that the thought must not always be fixed on the end of the way, when “the toils of the road will seem nothing,” so He is constantly teaching us today. By His own example He has shown us that if we are bearing the cross unwillingly, there will be a very real disposition to talk much about the trials through which He leads us; but if we walk close to Him, happy in the abundant supply of His grace for every time of need, and catching something of His spirit of delight in the Father’s will, ah, then, we can and will rejoice in our privileges of suffering for His sake, and to the end that the refining we so much need may be accomplished in us. Then our

“Sorrow touched by heaven grows bright
With more than rapture’s ray;
As darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day.”

My Peace I Give Unto You.

A very beautiful name is given to Christ when He is called “The Lord of Peace.” He is the great Peacemaker, for He has “made peace by the blood of his cross”; and He is also the great Peacegiver, for He says, “My peace I give unto you.” Bringing to us, first of all, peace of conscience, and teaching us how to look up to God without fear, He brings us next, peace of heart, and teaches us how to look out upon the world without fear. By His cross He makes us satisfied with God’s way of saving us; by His life He teaches us to be equally satisfied with God’s way of training us. He brings us into His own perfect calm by showing us how to live, as He himself always did, with an absolutely unquestioning trust in a heavenly Father’s love. Not one single instance can we find in which He sought to have His earthly lot changed from what His Father had appointed it to be, or complained because He could not change it, or made Himself miserable by anticipating the sorrows that were lying in front and ready to fall.

We are constantly criticizing God. Christ never did. Even though not actually criticizing Him deliberately, we are yet constantly imagining that things might, somehow, have been better arranged for us; the rebellious heart, if not the lips, will say, “I could have borne this if it had only come to me at some other time—if it had come alone, instead of being accompanied by so many other depressing circumstances—if it had been of a different kind, failure in my business instead of failure in my health, a stroke upon myself instead of upon my child, the loss of some other friend than just that one that was the best-loved of all”; and so on through a hundred suppositions of what might have been better arranged. How seldom do we realise the faithlessness that is in such a mood of soul as this!

But we may come to realise it, and escape from it too, if, in the secret of His presence, alone with Him, we lay our burdens at His feet and listen for His word of peace. For, as we listen, He will tell us much.

He will tell us that the whole explanation of the severity of the trial (in our view of it) is that our desires and His purposes are not moving in the same line, that we have not the same idea of life that He has, otherwise there would be

no disappointment in us with the pain that life may bring; that if we are making it our chief aim in life just to have a prosperous time of self-indulgence, while His aim is to train us all along life's way to holiness of character and heavenliness of spirit, there is sure to be collision everywhere between our wills and His, and that not till this collision ceases can we get the peace we long to know.

In the secret of His presence He will tell us more. He will tell us that if we rebel against our trials, it is only because we do not see His planned issue of them in our greater good; that they are only a Great Refiner's fire for the purifying of His gold, a Great Vine-dresser's knife for increasing the fruitfulness of His Vine. He will whisper to our crushed hearts in the secret place, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

It is only the eye of the sculptor that can see beforehand the finished statue in the rough marble-block; but he does see it, and all the strokes of his tools are meant to bring out to the eyes of others what is already clear to his own. And the strokes of God's hand are only to produce the perfect beauty of the soul, and make that as visible to others as it now is to Himself. Nothing is more certain than that we will be perfectly satisfied with His work when we see it finished. Why should we not be satisfied now when He tells us what a glorious finish He will make, and leave to Him the choosing of the tools.

Our gracious God promises us more than sympathy alone when we lay our sorrows at His feet; He promises us help as well. But we must leave to Him the way of helping us. Many a time we distress ourselves needlessly by refusing to rise above our fears till we see how the help is to come, and in what precise way we may look for an answer to our prayer. We want God to explain to us the secrets of His working before we feel certain that He will make things go right. But there is something better than **understanding** God, and that is, **trusting** Him. He does not promise to explain Himself. He does promise to **reveal** Himself; but He never reveals Himself except to an **absolute trust**.

And has it not been often so, that we, like Martha, have been inclined to say when overshadowed with some special trial, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." And even when we have been conscious of His power, we could think only of its exercise in that future day when all will be made right, forgetting that "the Resurrection and the Life" is even now with us, "a very present help in trouble," and fully competent to steal the bitter from life's woes, and send us on our way with a glad and trustful heart here and now. Over and over again we have been assured of His power to make all things work out our highest good, to make these things profitable even in the life that now is, and as often been assured that ere long there will be a looking back to praise the way love has led us day by day. And repeated experiences have surely been ours when the cloud has lifted and the afterward of blessing come, that the Master has said to us as He said to Martha long ago, "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" "Believest thou this?" Yea, Lord, we do believe, help Thou our unbelief, and graciously hear us as we pray

"O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by every foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe.
"Lord, lead me to a faith like this,
Through trial though it be;
For O! the rest of faith is bliss,
The bliss of rest in Thee."

Through Faith to Sight.

"Said I not unto thee, that if thou **wouldst** believe, thou **shouldst** see?" This was the Lord's tender way of comforting a very sad-hearted disciple, from whom, after weary waiting and disappointment, hope seemed to have fled forever. Four days before, He had said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby;" and these words spoken first beyond Jordan, He had sent as a message of hope, while He Himself still lingered far away. No doubt on coming to Bethany, He had repeated them Himself to her. But the dead body, with corruption already begun, seemed to give them the lie, and as she looked at the grave, her faith staggered under the blow. Jesus did not argue with her; He just calmly put all her objections aside. She was looking at the difficulties in the way. He never so much as alluded to difficulties. He simply took her in behind the difficulties, and bade her think of His Almighty Power, and trust Him to the last. "Said I not unto thee?" Well, I say the same thing still.

I read these words with deepest joy, not because of what they tell me about Martha, but because of what they tell me of her Master and mine. I **see** the absolute trustworthiness of my Christ. I see His claim to be trusted; but I see more. I see His right to be trusted to the uttermost; and I see that He is infinitely worthy of that trust. Had Martha only known her Lord sufficiently, no doubt would have troubled her poor heart for a moment. Before I really know Christ, it is difficult for me to trust Him utterly; but, once known, it is impossible not to trust Him. This is a secret that the great Apostle Paul

had well learned, when he said, "I know whom I have believed." He did not say, "I know that I have trusted him"; he said, "I know Him on whom my trust reposes; I know His character to be the infinitely trustworthy one"; and this **was a thing** that could never need reconsideration. It was a settled matter. "I know whom I have believed"; not, "I know One whom I must trust, as **soon as necessity** arises"; nor, "I know One whom I will trust when things come to the worst"; nor, "I know One whom I must trust as my last resource, when all others fail"; but,

"I know Him to whom I have already surrendered my trust, whom I have trusted once for all, and who will keep me safe forever. I trust Him because I know Him. I know Him to be One who will never go back on His word." Was it not just to this that Jesus sought to bring the weeping Martha? "Said I not unto thee? **What** I have once said I will never unsay." It seems to me that, for all the high purposes of faith, it is easier for me to know Christ than to know any one else, or even to know myself, and that for the simple reason, that neither I nor other men are ever two days alike, but He changes not. When I see Christ at all I see what He will always be. Looking at myself and men is like looking at the ever-changing sea. Looking at Christ is like looking at a great mountain-peak, the same in all seasons, the same by night as by day. Mists may cover it for a time, but when they lift, it stands out absolutely as it was before. Knowing Him thus, I must trust Him evermore.

"Said I not unto thee?" was a rebuke as well as an encouragement. It was like what He said to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me Philip?" What my Master wants from me above all things else is a simple faith in what He has already said to me. There is nothing He takes such loving pains to teach me, but nothing I am so slow to learn as this absolute and unquestioning faith in Himself; and to all my difficulties He has but one reply, "Believe and thou shalt see." If He delays to fulfil some of His words, and I begin to think that He cannot possibly fulfil them now, I will remember that the blessing is delayed, only that it may be a more enriching blessing when it comes. I think often of my Lord's anticipating love, the love that foresees my need, and provides beforehand for it; but I will think also of His tarrying love, the love that keeps me long in the darkness, and seems to disregard my cry.

I know that if He lays some heavy trial upon me, it is because He loves me; for the more precious the jewel, the more cutting it gets from the lapidary's hands. I will believe that if He continues the trial, it is still because He loves me; that if He seems only to heap fresh fuel upon an already scorching fire, it is because He loves me; that if, when I call Him to my Bethany, He lingers among the hills of Gilead, it is because He loves me; and I will believe that at last He will explain it all, "it was for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." At the right moment for me, as well as for Him, He will reveal that glory, and turn my sorrow into joy; for

"His wisdom is sublime,
His heart is ever kind;
God never is *before* His time,
And never is behind."

The Unspeakable Glory of the Joys to Come.

Let me learn, also, to deal with my own discouragements as Jesus dealt with Martha's, and put the things which I believe over against the things I see, and so find rest. If any simple-minded Christian were asked the secret of his peace, he would say, "I just believe what my God tells me, and I am at rest. What I see or feel does not disquiet me, because I set over against it, what, on His authority, I believe. I see enough of sin in me every day to make me cry 'chief of sinners'; but I believe so fully in the forgiveness of sins, that I know 'to me there is no condemnation.' I see in my outward lot, a thousand things that trouble me, but I believe, notwithstanding, that 'all things work together' for my good. I see sin covering the earth, and Satan appearing to triumph everywhere; but believe his destruction is as sure to come, as it is that Jehovah reigns. I see the sick bed, and the coffin, and the grave of some dearly loved one whose going from me has left me desolate; but though I see death, I believe in life; though I see the tomb, I believe in the resurrection from the tomb; though I see and feel the sundering of sweet earthly bonds, I believe in the cementing of still sweeter heavenly ones. I do not see the blessedness of heaven, the white robes, the palms, the harps of gold; and yet I am not disheartened because I cannot see them, for I believe so surely, that God has promised them, that to me they are as the most real of all real things. I can praise Him for all that He is going to do, as truly as for all He has already done, and say, 'Glory to Thee for all the grace I have not tasted yet.' And if, when first in heaven, I should for a moment or two be utterly amazed that such a sinner as I should be a 'partaker of His glory,' I think my tender Lord will just repeat to me His old question, even there: 'Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?'"

PEOPLES PAPER AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM (Bi-Monthly) 60 cents per annum, post paid.

Published by the Berean Bible Institute,
19 Ermington Place, Kew, Melbourne,
Victoria, Australia, 3101.

The Christian's Confidence.

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Phil. 1:6.)

THE confidence here mentioned by the Apostle Paul is in contrast with the confidence we often find in the world—the confidence that sometimes amounts to recklessness as manifest in the loss of the Prime Minister of Australia last December in the sea. *We* sympathise with the bereaved family of Mr. Holt, and feel sad that his confidence in his own strength to swim in a raging sea any time he desired led to his untimely death. It was very touching that so many prominent world citizens came to Melbourne to pay their respects to the one who led Australia and did his best for this country at all times.

A quotation from the lone yachtsman who sailed all the way from England without touching land, and who came through the Heads the very day Mr. Holt was lost, is very enlightening. He said, “Any man who thinks he knows the sea is doomed. Out there alone you see the might and the strength of the ocean and it humbles you.” This seems a very good thought, coming from a wise man. It is no doubt a very good lesson for Christians as we realise how small we are in the sight of our Heavenly Father. This sailor could respect the strength of the sea, and not act foolishly. The Christian learns to know where strength may be found, that is trusting in the Lord and rejoicing in His Word of truth, which is sure of fulfilment because we are assured the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform His plan.

While we see the distress of nations, with perplexity, all around us, we do know the very things coming to pass, even dreadful things, are fulfilling a part of God's plan. How insignificant are the greatest nations of the earth when God's time comes to bring them down to prepare the way for Christ's Kingdom. The Lord's people are so favored in knowing God's great plan to institute such a kingdom that will never pass away. The present kingdoms of earth are in the melting pot, so to speak. They must be removed to make way for Christ's kingdom which will be “the desire of all nations.” When *we* know this, surely the Christian feels honored and humbled in knowing from God's Word why things in the world are as they are, and what the outcome will be, to the praise of God. How thankful we are to see God's glorious plan outworking in our day for the benefit of His people at this time, that they may have His strength and confidence in their hearts, and not depend upon their own strength, and also know that all the families of the earth will be blessed out of the present chaos and ruin, in the years just ahead.

Those who have committed their lives to the Lord have confidence in the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Tim. 1:12,— “For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” How confidently Paul could write to Timothy in these strains! We have the same assurance; we

are persuaded the Lord is able to keep each of His children in the Christian way, all they have committed unto Him, against that day, through the testing time and into the wonderful kingdom of Christ.

From 1 Pet. 1:3-5 the Apostle Peter gives us such a lovely assurance of the strength, confidence and trust that the real Christian can have in the God of his salvation. The kingdoms of this world shall fade away in insignificance, but this wonderful inheritance, Peter says, “fadeth not away.” It is “reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God”; not kept by our own ability, or our own confidence, but “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Ready to be revealed in the gathering Home of all the members in Christ in this closing period of the Gospel Age, being gathered to be with Christ to participate in the glorious kingdom work of blessing all the families of the earth. How true are the words of the Lord,—“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord.”

May we, then, take a lesson from a recent tragic event, and realise our confidence and trust are in the Lord's hands, and as we co-operate with Him and allow Him to have His will with us, He shall bless and over-rule our going out and coming in, and our lives shall be useful in His service now and prepared for every good work in the glorious time to come. Read Phil. 4:6-8. The Apostle Paul gives us this lovely message in regard to our Christian walk; may it be that these words to the Philippians are a guide to us in our going out and coming in throughout this new year 1968, to the praise of the Lord.

Adelaide Easter Convention

The Adelaide brethren are arranging to hold their Easter Convention this year from Good Friday to Easter Monday (D.V.), in Manchester Unity Building (2nd Floor), 16 Franklin Street, Adelaide. Further information from the secretary—Mr. J. Jordan, P.O. Box 47, Kingswood, South Australia, 5062.

Convention News

THE Annual Convention arranged by the Melbourne Class and held over the Christmas period proved a very helpful season of blessing and refreshing to all able to attend. We lift up our hearts in thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for all the blessings received at His hands. It was a pleasure to welcome visiting brethren from five of the Australian States and New Zealand, and their contributions to the programme assisted greatly in providing the spiritual food enjoyed throughout the gatherings.

Over the four-day Convention three Bible Studies were conducted on the passages 1 Thes. 4:13-18; John 14:1-9 and Luke 21:25-33. Each of these studies gave opportunity for general expression by the brethren, and proved helpful covering the variety of Bible truths applicable from the days of our Lord's first advent to our own day and on into the kingdom. Thoughts on these studies are contained in the Convention Notes now also available to all friends desiring copies. Also the article in this issue—"Thoughts on 1 Thes. 4:13-18,"—provides helpful details on this important passage of Scripture.

In the addresses given by the brethren a variety of subjects were helpfully presented on the following subjects— "The Christian in a World of Change"; "What Did Jesus' Death Effect?"; "Three Degrees of Love"; "Loving Our Lord's Manifestation"; "Do Not Quarrel On the Way"; "Grace and Knowledge"; "The Knowledge of God"; "The Holy Spirit"; "The Spirit of Sonship"; "Direction"; "The Lamb Slain and Victorious"; "The Test of Time"; "Wisdom, Earthly and Spiritual"; and "Our Victorious Faith." Some of these addresses shall be printed in the "Peoples Paper" and notes on each are also recorded in the Convention Notes previously mentioned.

Three Fellowship Meetings were conducted and messages of greeting with Christian love were received from Classes and numerous friends throughout Australia and overseas. Three from U.S.A., came from Brothers Pollock and Wilcox, also a delayed message from Brother Lanowick. Another greeting came from Brother Mann of West Germany and all these messages of Christian love were warmly appreciated. At the closing Fellowship Meeting the Melbourne brethren selected the passage in John 14:1-3 as their message of greeting to all brethren who had remembered the Convention, and as a general message to the Lord's people everywhere with warm Christian love. The "Hymns We Love and Why" session was again very popular, the hymns of praise to God being much enjoyed by all present. The Praise and Testimony sessions also gave opportunity for the brethren to express their appreciation for all the Lord's favors and blessings received throughout the year, and for His over-ruling in connection with their attendance at the Convention. On the evening of the second day of Convention, the "Dawn" TV film "The Unknown God" was screened and appreciated by some new friends, and also by all who had seen this previously.

Throughout the Convention it was a pleasure to have a number of our Melbourne Polish brethren with us, and who are now able to follow the meetings in English with increasing understanding and appreciation. The usual Love Feast concluded the Convention sessions, with the singing of the lovely hymns "Blest be the tie that binds," and "God be with you till we meet again." A final prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord and asking His blessing to be over all present and His people everywhere closed a profitable Melbourne Convention for 1967.

Thoughts on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

IN verse 13 the Apostle desires that his readers have clear knowledge concerning the blessed hope of the resurrection of the dead. He refers to “them which are asleep”, and he is writing with the special object of comforting the brethren so that they may not be found sorrowing as others which have no hope. It is possible that some of the brethren in the early Church regarded it as an advantage to be “alive,”—still in the flesh—at the time of our Lord’s second presence, as though these would receive some kind of blessing not possible for those who had “fallen asleep.”

In verse 14 the Apostle says,—”If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” Verse 15,—”For . . . we which are alive and remain unto the presence of the Lord, shall not precede them which are asleep,” (Diaglott). Order will be observed in the resurrection; some will be glorified or “changed first,” and others afterward. The Apostle here declares that the living saints, who are left over to the presence of the Lord, will by no means precede those who fell asleep. Those “dead in Christ,” who are fallen asleep are not required to wait in sleep for the living members to finish their course, but are resurrected at once, as one of the first acts of the Lord at His second presence. This is confirmed by the Apostle’s words in the latter part of verse 16,—”the dead in Christ shall rise first.”

In verse 16 the Apostle describes the conditions which will accompany our Lord’s second presence. He says, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” “With a shout.” Since our Lord Jesus comes in the manner of a thief, that is, secretly, it is evident that when Paul wrote in our text that Jesus would “descend from heaven with a shout,” he must have been using pictorial language. The Greek word here translated “shout” means literally to incite, or to urge, to encourage. The aspect of affairs in the world for the past hundred years very strikingly corresponds with this symbol, in the outbursts of world-wide encouragement for all men to wake up to a sense of their rights and privileges as men, and to consider their mutual relationships, the principles upon which they are based and the ends which they should accomplish. In the Lord’s providence, the great increase of knowledge of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the enlightenment it has brought to the people world-wide has incited a clamouring for equality and rights. And how this symbolic “shout” has already altered the course of the pre-1914 world, and shaken its very foundations.

Daniel foretold the increase of knowledge which brought about this clamouring for human rights. (Dan. 12:4.) This increase of knowledge along all lines, which is arousing the people to throw off their age-old superstitions, has come about as a result of the fact that we are already in “the day of the Lord.” True, the foundation for this general dissemination of knowledge had already been laid through the use of the printing press and other latter-day devices of communication. Now the general diffusion of knowledge has gained sufficient momentum to stir up the masses to begin casting off their shackles of superstition and class rule, and it is creating within them a desire for that economic liberty, security, and happiness which they insist should be the heritage of every human.

Hence it is seen that a mighty “shout” has attended our Lord’s return, even as Paul predicted. The people have heard it and have taken it up, having been incited to clamour for the things which they now believe are rightfully theirs.

By it the Lord is creating a state of mind in the masses of the oppressed and suffering millions of the world that will ultimately contribute to the complete overthrow of the present social order. This shout is also accomplishing a gradual preparation of the hearts and minds of the people for the blessings of the coming kingdom of Christ, blessings which will be dispensed to a dying world just beyond the final spasm of this great “time of trouble.” (Dan. 12:1.)

In our text Paul prophesied that the Lord would return “with the voice of the archangel.” This is another striking symbol of similar import. The name “archangel” signifies chief messenger; and our anointed Lord Himself is Jehovah’s Chief Messenger—the Messenger of the covenant. (Mal. 3:1.) Daniel refers to the same personage, calling him Michael, which name signifies—who **as God**—an appropriate name for Him who is “the express image of the Father’s person,” and the representative of His authority and power. The voice of the archangel represents Christ’s authority and command.

The same thought is differently expressed by Daniel, when he says, “Then shall Michael, the great prince, **stand up.**” To stand up signifies to assume authority, to give commands. The Psalmist says,—”He uttered his voice; the earth melted.”

The great time of trouble will be precipitated, and the earth (organized society) will melt, or disintegrate, when the new Ruler utters His voice of command. At His command, systems of error, civil, social and religious must go down, however old, or firmly entrenched and fortified they may be. The sword out of His mouth shall cause the havoc. The truth on every subject, and in all its varied aspects, shall judge men, and under His power and overruling, shall cause the

overturning of evil and error in all their thousand forms.

“The trump of God” is another meaningful symbol. Paul here refers to what the Revelator designates “the seventh trumpet,” the “last trump” in a **series** of symbolic trumpets. (Rev. 11:15; 1 Cor. 15:52.) The proof that these references are to the same trumpet is found in the record of the events connected with each. Paul mentions the resurrection, and the establishment of the Lord’s Kingdom, as connected with “the trump of God,” and the Revelator mentions the same with even greater minuteness. The propriety of calling the “seventh,” or “last trump,” the **“trump of God,”** is evident too when we remember that the events mentioned under the preceding six trumpets of Revelation refer to humanity’s doings, while the seventh refers specially to the Lord’s work, and covers the “Day of the Lord.” (Rev. 10:7; 11:15, 18.)

Thus we find the “shout,” “the voice of the archangel,” and “the trump of God” all symbols, and now in process of fulfilment. Note carefully, too, the fact that each of the three prophecies just referred to (Dan. 12:1; Rev. 11:15; 1 Thes. 4:16) declares the Lord’s **presence** at the time when the events mentioned transpire. They were foretold for the very purpose of indicating the manner in which His **invisible** presence would be manifested to those who have faith in the word of prophecy. Paul says, “The Lord **shall descend with** (literally **in**, or **during**) a “shout,” “voice,” “trumpet,” etc. John says that the kingdoms of this world become His during the time of these events; and Daniel says, “At that time shall Michael, the great prince (Christ), stand up” (be present) and begin to prepare to take to Himself His great power. If, therefore, we can recognise the “shout,” the voices, and the sounding of the great symbolic trumpet, we should accept them as indications, not that the Lord will come soon, but rather that He has come and is now present, and that the harvest work of gathering the wheat is already under way. Yet it is not to the natural vision, but only to the eye of faith, through the sure word of prophecy, that His presence and work can be discerned. Also the “shout,” the “voice of the archangel,” and the “trump of God,” are all instrumentalities for the accomplishment of the harvest work of the Gospel Age. (See Matt. 24:31.)

In the latter part of verse 16 the Apostle says,—“And the dead in Christ shall rise first.” The **“dead in Christ”** are not required to wait in sleep for the living members to finish their course in death, but are resurrected at once, as one of the first acts of the Lord at His second presence: **“for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead (in Christ) shall be raised incorruptible,** and we shall be changed.” (1 Cor. 15:52.)

Verse 17,—“Then (thereafter) we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” “We which are alive and remain (at the time of the Lord’s second presence) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds (He cometh with clouds) to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (See 1 Cor. 15:51, 52.) “We shall not **all sleep** (says the Apostle) but we shall all be changed.”

So, then, at the Lord’s presence the resurrection of the sleeping saints takes place. It would now be proper to say **has taken place,** since we can recognise the signs of His “parousia,” and then the saints still in the flesh are “changed.”

As each one finishes the earthly course, they are gathered to meet the Lord and the risen saints in the air. What is the significance of being **“caught up together”**? The Diaglott renders this,—“**At the same time.**” This would not mean the same **instant** of time, but rather the same period of time—the period of Christ’s secret presence, before His manifestation to the world. We should remember that the Apostles were not only instructors, expounders of God’s Word, but they were prophets themselves also, and in foretelling events not then due, they used figures, symbols, and dark sayings to be understood by the Church when the due time came for the understanding to be made plain. In regard to the expression “caught away in the clouds together” we should remember that all the prophecies looking down to this period called the “Day of the Lord” and the “Day of Trouble,” state the many great events of this time as though they would all take place together; and so they do, for nothing intervenes to break the chain of events; link follows link, and they go all together, clouds of trouble follow one another closely, the one fading away where the next is beginning. Like the cars in a train, they all go together, and yet one is first and another is last. So likewise the living will be caught away in these clouds to the new power of the air—together—just as when a school is dismissed the pupils leave it together, yet they do not all pass through the doorway at the same instant of time.

Paul’s “clouds” in which the living are to be caught away, coincide exactly with the “clouds and thick darkness” of trouble, by which all the prophets so often represent the troubles of this Day of the Lord. And the **“air”** into which they are caught, and in which they are to be with the Lord, we apprehend to be no less a symbol than the others. A symbol of what? Of power and dominion. And if we are to be “changed” and are to enter into and share this dominion, how appropriate to say in symbol that we will be caught up into the **“air”** power, and be forever in it, with the Lord.

Thus, the same word is used elsewhere by the same Apostle. In Eph. 2:2, he speaks of the “power of the air,” and declares that Satan now holds that “power” which the “air” symbolizes. And when we remember that “sea” in symbol represents the lawless and unruly classes of men, that “earth” represents organized society, and that “mountains” rep-

resent earthly governments, what is more reasonable than that the “air” or “heavens” should be used to symbolize the invisible yet all-pervading power and influence of spirit beings.

And if “air” is thus used to represent the present evil spiritual control, how appropriate that the same symbol should be used in describing the new spiritual empire of the Prince of light who becomes the new Prince of the air, and deposes and binds the present usurper.

Paul, explaining the resurrection of the sleeping saints, and the “change” of those who are alive and remain unto the presence of the Lord, calls it a mystery (1 Cor. 15:51, 52)—a matter not yet made fully plain and clear of which he could only give them a glimpse. And he declares of the living, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at (Greek, ‘during,’ or ‘in’) the last trump.” Here the symbolic trumpet is again introduced, which covers the period of the Harvest, the period of the Lord’s secret presence, and it is **in** or during this time, that the dead saints shall be raised and the living members “changed.” “For the trumpet shall sound and the dead (in Christ) shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed.” While, therefore, all must be changed, and the change of each will be “in a moment,” all will not be raised and changed in the same moment—the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we—continuously— as each one finishes their earthly course in death, without interruption or anything to prevent, will be “caught up together,”—to be together—in association with them into the power of the air. “And so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Verse 18,—”Wherefore comfort (exhort, strengthen, encourage) one another with these words.”

Passover Memorial 1968

The anniversary of the Memorial of Christ’s death falls this year on the evening of Thursday, 11th April. It is the privilege of the Lord’s people to observe this memorial at this season “in remembrance of Christ.”

Memorial Services

Melbourne—Sunday, 7th April, at 6.30 p.m., at Masonic Hall, 254 Swan Street, Richmond.

Adelaide—Sunday, 7th April, at 6 p.m., at Manchester Unity Building (2nd Floor), 16 Franklin Street, Adelaide.

Sydney—Thursday, 11th April, at 7 p.m., at 53 Bennett Street, West Ryde.

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“The Divine Plan of the Ages,” Cloth bound-80c; paper covers-55c.

“Emphatic Diaglott,” New Testament—\$2.20.

“Daily Heavenly Manna,” birthday pages—\$1.10. “Tabernacle Shadows”—68c. “The Book of Books,” Reviewing the Bible as a whole—\$1.10.

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