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How Great is Thy Goodness.

(Address—Contributed.)

“O how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast prepared for those that fear Thee.”—(Psa. 31:19-24.)

IT seems that there are expressions in the Psalms to meet every experience of the Christian: whether he be passing through the deep waters of affliction, or feasting on the joys of the Lord's bountiful table with its cup running over; whether in trial or oppression through failure, or exulting in the victory of faith: whether feeling oppressed through contamination with evil, beset with foes of the world, the flesh, or the devil, or rejoicing in forgiveness and restoration. It is by experiences as these that we are to be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and when we realise that all the circumstances and conditions which the Lord permits to come to us reveal His love, His way of working in us, to make us fit to be joint-heirs with Christ in the Kingdom, then we can feel with the Psalmist -- O how great is Thy goodness.”

It is by experiences of the Lord's overruling in our lives, since we entered the narrow way as consecrated followers of our Lord; that is, to spend our lives endeavouring to do not our own will or desires, that we can appreciate the words recorded of Christ—“Lo, in the volume of the book it is written, I come to do Thy will, O God.” No doubt all who have been long in the way can look back and see how the Heavenly Father's kind hand has guided, provided, protected, and hindered us taking wrong steps, and overruling and perhaps preventing harmful consequences; thus, true to the promise, He has made all things work together for good for us. It is when we thus trace the tender leadings and patient longsuffering of our God with all our failures, that we feel He has been as James 5:7 says, respecting “the husbandman waiting for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it.” He has been gradually leading step by step, helping us to overcome our failings and to produce the fruits of the spirit—to become more like Christ. Realising this, then we can enter into the spirit of the Psalmist—“O how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast prepared for them that fear Thee.”

If all mankind knew of the goodness of God, then absolute fools only would refrain from rejoicing that the Great Creator who has all power and controls the universe, is so kind, so just, so wise. When all the world learn and know God, then all will indeed rejoice and offer true worship, “for all nations shall come and worship before Thee.”—Rev. 15:4.

We know that there was a wonderful preparation made for mankind even before our first parents were created. While the Edenic Paradise was lost through disobedience, we are reminded of its restoration in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matt. 25, picturing the mediatorial reign of Christ. The reward of the righteous is-- “Come, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” That is a wonderful thing promised to all the willing and obedient of mankind at the end of the Messianic Kingdom. Even all who will enjoy that great restitution — paradise restored — will be able to sing. “O how great is Thy goodness.”

However, these Psalms were written more particularly in respect of the Christ—Messiah—and it is those only who have been called of God to be members in the Messiah Class that can enter fully into the spirit of the Psalmist, and claim the exceeding great and precious promises which are all yea and amen in Christ. These are they to whom the Psalm seems to refer; these of the high calling of God in Christ who are to inherit the wonderful promises, being made partakers of the divine nature. These are they to whom our Lord promised that He would come again and receive them unto Himself, that where He is there they should be also. These are they of whom it is written, “Eye hath not seen nor ear heard the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” As the rich promises of God in Christ are

appreciated by faith, these “Stand all astonished with wonder and gaze on the ocean of love,” and exclaim, -O how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast prepared for them that fear Thee.”

Then, beyond all this wondrous provision for the members of this Messiah Class and the privilege of being used as joint-heirs with Christ in His kingdom—”To sit with him in his throne, even as he overcame and is set down with his Father in his throne.”—there is the glorious prospect of rolling back the Jordan stream of death, restraining all the forces of evil, and establishing the rule of righteousness and bringing peace and joy to the human race, not only for those on earth at the time of the establishment of the Messiah’s reign, but for all who have lived and gone down into death. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,” and the whole earth will be a paradise. That is what was promised to the dying thief; he will be there and will join in the song, “O how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast prepared for them that fear Thee.” Ha, along with the rest of mankind, will be gradually led up the highway of holiness until all shall learn of the goodness of God and join in the chorus of Rev. 5:13—:’And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, heard I saying, Blessing and honour and glory be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever.”

It will be a glorious thing to be one with Christ in bringing about such a happy consummation of all earth’s sorrows, so that there will be no more curse; the earth freed from all pests (no longer cursed for man’s sake) will yield its increase without the toil and sweat of the present time: there shall be no more death and God shall wipe the tears from off all faces. Well may we exclaim in the words of 1 John 3:1, 2--Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God . . . and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” “O how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast prepared for them that fear Thee.”

Them That Fear Thee.

- (1) What does it mean to fear the Lord? Do those who fear the Lord never go short of anything?
- (2) Certainly the theologians of the dark ages, and some even of the present time, have done all they could to make people afraid of God, but God does not desire us to be in dread of Him, but rather that we love Him and reverently appreciate His greatness, His wisdom, justice, love and power, and heartily seek to do His will and service. There is such a lack of godly fear in this our day. There is so much callousness disrespect—in regard to both religious and secular forms and authorities, that it is not surprising to find so little knowledge of God and so little wisdom in both religious and worldly concerns, for the very beginning of wisdom is the reverence of the Lord.

Canon Berry, speaking in Edinburgh some time ago said--”Human ingenuity seems bankrupt, everywhere is perplexity and despair. At every point questions confront us which seem to be like Sphinx’s riddles and as destructive to those who give wrong answers. We seem to be gripped by forces and tendencies too fast for our understanding or control, and in face of them we are paralysed and helpless.” Such is the result of man’s waywardness and lack of reverence for the Lord, his Creator.

Even among those who know something of present truth, there has been lack of reverence for the things of God and a consequent confusion and lack of wisdom. Probably we may have noticed at times when a Class has been studying along certain lines of Christian conduct that there have been evidences that the lessons have not sunk very deeply into the heart. With a proper reverence for the Lord and His Word would we not be more anxious to apply the lessons to our conduct? How forceful are the words of James, that we receive with meekness the engrafted Word and that we be doers of the Word and not hearers only . . . (James 1:21-27.) So often as certain lessons seem to be emphasised we may be apt to think—that is just what ought to do Brother So-and-so, or Sister So-and-so good, if ‘they would only take that lesson. And that may be quite true, but it is possible that while we are so thinking, we have not been examining ourselves and are missing the lesson that would do us good.

A proper reverence for God will lead to a meditation upon His instructions, so that we may bring our every thought, word and act into harmony with His will. The more we learn to apply the Word, the more we learn of the beauty of the Lord’s will, the more heartily shall we be able to realise “How great is Thy goodness to them that fear Thee.” Those that fear Him are those who appreciate the drawing of the Lord, being brought to the Son so that by faith in His great sacrifice to pay the price of sin, they may be justified from the condemnation of death under which we are born. Then they hear the invitation to present their bodies a living sacrifice to God, that they may follow in the steps of Christ. They are then begotten of the holy spirit and can begin to understand the Divine purpose .and glorious hope in Christ. So it is that we read—”No one cometh unto the Son except the Father draw him,” and again, as Jesus said, “No man cometh unto the Father except by me.” No one could get this far without reverence for the Lord.

There is no dread in this fear of the Lord. No, -we love God because He first loved us, and sent His son to be the

propitiation for our sins,” and “perfect love casteth out fear.” There is, however, an appreciation of the Lord’s greatness, His holiness, His wisdom and goodness, and our own unworthiness of all His kind care; whose eye is upon us; whose wing of love is over us; whose almighty power overshadows us; who guides us by His counsel and who supplies all our needs out of His riches in glory, as we again read from the Psalm (84:11, 12) , “The Lord is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” And again, “O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.”

“My spirit on Thy care
Blest Saviour I recline;
Thou wilt not leave me in despair,
For Thou art Love Divine.”

(2) But do we not sometimes see the Lord’s people in want? Yes, indeed. During this Gospel Age, when the Body of the Messiah is being selected, some of the saintliest of the Lord’s people have suffered great privations and persecutions. Some have felt the pangs of hunger and poverty, and have passed through times of deepest distress. From a worldly standpoint they have gone short of many good things. Even the Apostle Paul speaks of what he went through. - Five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods. Thrice I suffered shipwreck; once was I stoned ... In hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, etc.” (2 Cor. 1 1 :24-27.) Such experiences are necessary for our training for the great work of the kingdom age. They are good things in developing a character like Christ’s, perfected through sufferings and touched with a feeling for the poor groaning creation that is to be blessed at the “manifestation of these sons of God.”

If it were that all Christians were miraculously provided with all the good things of the earth and protected from all the ills that come to humanity, then no doubt the whole world would have become Christians. It is in the next age that the righteous will flourish as a palm tree; at the present time, while Satan is the “prince of this world,” we see “the wicked prosper as a green bay tree.”

The Church is being selected under the reign of evil, and the great adversary is permitted to put stumbling blocks and trials in our way, so that, like the Master, we may prove our loyalty to God under the hard conditions and trying circumstances. Character is not developed without hardship, and unless we are transformed into the image of God’s dear Son, we shall fail to be a member of the great Messianic body. We see, then, that it would not be a good thing for us to be spared from trials, sorrows, difficulties, disciplines, etc. Such things, after all, are but for a moment and are but light afflictions compared to the weight of eternal glory that is to be revealed in us, if we endure to the end.

It is the way the Lord is working in us, to bring us fully to will and to do His good pleasure. We may be sure that He will not allow any trial more than we, by His grace, will be able to bear, and that some way or other He will make all things work together for good. “Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him”; “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you”; “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

While we pray, -Give us day by day our daily bread,” we know that it is not the rich nor the comfortably off that the Lord generally calls, but rather the poor of this world, rich in faith. Yet there is no want to them that fear Him. Those who reverence the Lord and whose times are in His hands can rest in His good providences. While like the Apostle we seek to earn sufficient for our own needs and maybe to assist others, yet, like him, we should count all earthly things as not worthy to be compared with the heavenly riches. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that love Him.” While the Lord is dealing with us to mould our hearts and minds—our dispositions to be like Christ, we know that He feels for us when we are passing through the deep waters, or in the hard places. Sometimes we may get experiences which we think we do not need; we cannot see what good they are to us.

“The temple stones God now prepares,
Oft cry, ‘You hurt me sore’ ;
The Sculptor seeks their perfectness,
And trims them more and more.
“Frail, shrinking nature cries, ‘Enough!’
Yet proves the Lord is good.

Sometimes it seems as in Isa. 54:7, 8 ”For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee.” Also Isa. 49:15, 16—”Can a woman forget her babe? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” So, it is not only in the wonderful promises of future heavenly bliss, but even in the wilderness journey we are guided, protected, provided for and sustained by the promised grace and the fulness of the Divine

promises, just as Rebekah was carried across the desert on the ten camels led by Eliezer, forsaking her own people and the old home; so the Church has been journeying across the desert of the Gospel Age on the promises. As Rebekah saw Isaac in the field at the end of the journey, so now we perceive the great Bridegroom has come to claim His Bride — the second presence of Christ is fulfilled.

Each member in Christ has the care of the Heavenly Father,—’ ‘The Father himself loveth you.- See also Matt. 10:28-30. The Psalmist says, “He bath showed me His marvellous kindness in a fenced city.” As the walls are round about Jerusalem, so the angel of the Lord encampeth around His people. Jerusalem is a figure of the Church, “The New Jerusalem, the city of the great King.”

Men have sought to put fences about themselves and so formed sects and divisions and claimed only those in their fences are saved. They thus enslave the people by a spirit of fear; so various sects and parties have been formed through a reverence for a leader, instead of reverence for the Lord. We want to be content with the fenced city which the Lord has provided for our protection. It was because of lack of reverence for the Lord, and instead a reverence for man that the great falling away from the faith into the Papal Church occurred in the early centuries of this age, and the same thing happened on a smaller scale when control of the W.T. Society was seized and a great falling away ‘from the faith occurred. We are exhorted by the Apostle to love our elders, and esteem them highly for their work’s sake, but we must keep ourselves from idols, and not allow anyone to dominate our faith or to circumvent our liberty of conscience. “Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not brought again into bondage.”

When we realise that the Almighty ‘shelters us under His wing; that “the Father himself loves us,” and that as members in Christ we can claim the wonderful promises of guidance, protection and providence, as well as the exceeding great and precious promises of future inheritance, then truly we can exclaim with David, who was a type of the Church, -0 hew great is Thy goodness which Thou bast prepared for them that fear Thee.”

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“Thou Preparest a Table”

Psalm 23:5.

WHEN the Lord prepares a table we may be sure of several things. First, that it will be clean : secondly, that it will be good ; thirdly, that it will be orderly, bountiful, and beautiful. And wherever we find the truth thus carefully set before the household of faith—whether by the press, the pen, or the platform—there we may be sure the spirit of the Lord has been at work directing and superintending the matter. The Prophet Isaiah (chap. 28:8) , referring to the tables of popular theology, now spread before the masses of nominal Christians, graphically described their present condition when he said : “For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.- For centuries past they have been feeding on the miserable husks of tradition until now a reaction has set in, and they are vomiting forth the abominable stuff, and their tables are full of filthiness.

Then again, there are many more tables being spread with new traditions, and human speculations to which those are promptly invited who turn away in disgust from the old polluted tables. In all of this the great adversary of the Church is diligently and faithfully at work with all his accustomed craft and cunning, using with great effect the press, the radio and the platform, the most potent agencies for reaching the people.

It is an increasingly popular idea among religious journalists that such a journal should be a medium, merely for the expression of all shades of human opinion upon all matters of divine revelation, and that each individual should abstract from them all what he conceives to be true and reject the rest. But this is precisely what the readers, and often the editors, too, of such journals are unable to do, and the general confusion is only increased unto greater blindness and denser darkness, and thus the purpose of the adversary is accomplished.

There is a deep responsibility to God, which every man assumes, whether he realises it or not when he becomes a public teacher. Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.—Matt. 5:19.

No table is fit for the household of faith to be summoned to that has not been spread by careful hands, fully submitted, and obedient to the great Head of the house, whose directions are found in His Word. God says (Hab. 2:2) to some of whom He has granted a measure of ability to serve the household, and who (verse 1) are watching (studying His Word) to know what He would have them communicate — write the vision (what you have seen of the divine truth) , and make it plain upon tables. That is, set it out in an orderly, systematic manner, that he may run that readeth it—that he may, run for the prize. Observe that it is not every man that is called to make the truth plain, but that some of the class specified are called to do so for the benefit of all the rest. In the Scriptures there are many surface truths which all may see and appreciate, but the systematic ordering of the divine plan, much of which was purposely hidden, and obscurely expressed, and the bringing out of its wonderful details, was left for an appointed time. When the appointed time has come, and the faithful watcher is led to see the systematic harmony of divine truth--not to guess at it, or to surmise about it, but to see it so plainly that he can clearly, logically and scripturally demonstrate it to others—then it becomes the privilege of such a one to make plain to others what the Lord has made plain to him. And such an one may consider his ability in this direction (together with a possible opportunity, and a strong love for the saints, which longs to bless them with a fuller knowledge of God, and to exhort and stimulate them to greater faithfulness) , as the Lord’s call to him to make it plain.

But such should remember that the commission is to “make it plain,” not to make it obscure. And if a man has no truth to make plain, but is only seeking the truth, he makes a great mistake in launching out his crude and inharmonious ideas for the confusion of other minds. Such an one should maintain the proper attitude of a disciple, a learner, until he does see clearly, -and is thus fitted to become a teacher of others. If he be a faithful student, studying to show himself a workman approved unto God, ere long he may enjoy the privilege of declaring the truth to others, and be greatly blessed in so doing.

None of the consecrated should be in haste to rush into print with crude, undefined ideas, and thus become stumbling blocks in the way of many others. Be content to spread before other hungry saints the truth you have received, and proved to your thorough satisfaction, but keep your table clean; do not make up for the deficiency of knowledge by spreading out a host of idle speculations. Better is a pure morsel from a clean table than great abundance under other conditions. By and by to this morsel another morsel will be added, and in due time the wealth of divine bounty will be realised.

The Praise Belongs to Him.

I know if I am chosen to joint-heirship with my Lord,
To reign with Him in glory, to receive that great reward ;
If after all my weaknesses a crown for me he'll claim,
I know that choice will surely bring great glory to Gods name.

If I had been more worthy, and my stumblings had been few,
When men gave God the glory, they'd have praised my virtue, too ;
If I'd ne'er lost a battle, or had never missed the mark,
As they talked about His goodness, mine, also, they'd remark.

But my being so deficient, in thought and word and deed,
Means He'll get all the glory—He deserves it all, indeed.
When they see this weak mortal raised to such immortal heights,
What praise will rise to Him who in such nothingness delights

I know that when my Saviour did return to Heaven above,
And was crowned with wondrous glory, it did prove His Father's love;
But thinking of Christ's merit and His sinless life of grace,
'Twas no wonder that Jehovah chose Him for such a place.

With me it is so different ; I have not one thing to plead.
That I should be more honored than another bruised reed ;
And truly there's no reason to give me a mite of praise ;
To Him belongs all glory for the joys which crown my days.

If you knew all my failings, and my blemishes so vile,
And saw the loving patience my Father shows the while,
'Twould amaze you beyond measure to think He could or would
Make me an 'able servant who should do His people good.

But if to Him such praise is due because of what I am—
Because of such a weakling He has made a stronger man,
Then what will be His glory when He's raised me higher still,
And crowned me with His choicest on the top of Zion's Hill ?

That all these years of striving find me so imperfect still,
Does not speak much to my credit nor give a happy thrill ;
Where I appear as worthy 'tis because His grace is there.
And in the praise and glory I deserve no part, no share.

I hate my faults and failings, and I fight them day by day,
But from self with all its weaknesses I cannot get away ;
Despite this fact. He uses me--bevond is still more grace—
And hosts will tell His glory—His who found poor me a place.

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Christ's Return-His Revealing and Manifestation.

(Continued from Last Month's Issue.)

THERE are some Scriptures which are used to teach contrary to what has been stated in these articles in the previous three issues of this paper, but which we believe will be found to be in harmony therewith when carefully examined.

For instance, Acts 1:11, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." The apostle Peter (1 Pet. 3:18) informs us plainly that our Lord was "put to death flesh, but quickened spirit," which is in harmony with Paul's statement—"sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body." So then, our Lord at His ascension was no longer human, but spirit, and after His ascension was exalted to the Divine nature "in the express image of the Father." He had, on a few occasions after His resurrection, assumed the human form so as to be seen by and to converse with the disciples, who were to be witnesses to the fact of His resurrection. Acts 1:9 reads, "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight." The eleventh verse does not promise that anyone will see our Lord return; it simply says that He will come again in like manner as He went. The cloud that received Him, then, may symbolise the same thing that the Lord indicated when He said, "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matt. 24:30.) That is, that clouds, in symbolic scriptural language, indicate trouble, distress or calamities, and Daniel informs us (Dan. 12:1) that when Michael (Christ) stands up, there is to be the greatest time of trouble ever experienced. The evangelist Luke, quoting the same words as Matt. 24:30, adds, Luke 21:27, 28, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption (or deliverance) draweth nigh." If it were, as some think, that our Lord will suddenly appear sitting on a cloud, there would be no waiting for the deliverance soon to be, for, according to their understanding, they would be instantly caught away to be with the Lord. The meaning seems clearly to be that the clouds of trouble encircle the earth, and the watchers are able to discern, in the severe experiences of the world, that it is the sign "of the presence of the Son of man," who has come and has taken control of the world. He will command "Peace, be still" (Psalm 46) and then cause "righteousness and truth to spring out of the earth." Mankind shall ultimately discern the Son of Man in the clouds in the same way that we can discern Satan in all the wickedness now in the world and in all the false religions of our day. It is in this way that ultimately "every eye shall see (discern) him." (Rev. 1:7.)

Earth's New Ruler.

Satan has long been "The prince of this world," "The prince of the power of the air," "The god of this world who now worketh in the children of disobedience." (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2.) He has been permitted thus to reign and bring experiences to mankind so that they may learn what it is to be disobedient to God's laws. Christ comes to bind Satan, and to take the Kingdom instead. He will deliver mankind from bondage to Satan, sin and death. As no one sees Satan, who is a spiritual being, so the world will not see the new Ruler, who has distinctly said, "The world seeth me no more.- (John 14:19.) The Church will see Him, for they are to be changed to be "like Him," spirit beings. It is when we see matters in this light that the Scriptures become so much clearer and truths respecting our Lord's second presence open up.

In the 24th of Matthew we have in symbolic language a history of the Gospel Age, terminating with the second presence of Christ. The same history, with more detail, is given in the Book of Revelation, also in symbols. The disciples, being impressed by the Lord's doings and sayings respecting the Temple a few days before His death, asked Him, Matt. 24:3, "Tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy presence (Greek, parousia) and of the end of the world (Age) ."

Verses 4-14 seem to be a brief synopsis of the Gospel Age, from that time down to the end. It is an outline of prophecy which has been very clearly fulfilled, as history reveals, What deceptions there have been in connection with the Christian religion. What great claims have been made to great authority, even to being Christ. What wars and unrest, what famines, pestilences, scourges, and the people of God have been martyred and tortured. Nation has risen against nation.

Verse 14: "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.- The Gospel is the good news of Christ's Kingdom for the blessing of all the families of the earth. It has now been preached in every land, to every nation and almost every dialect, so that we are surely living in the "time of the end."

Verses 15-22 appear to be so worded that they answer that portion of the question relating to the typical temple and Jerusalem and gave instructions to such as had "ears to hear," which saved many lives when the city was taken by Titus' army. Josephus points out that. The fall of the city seemed imminent about A.D. 68, but for some reason the

Roman Army was recalled, and so Christians made good their escape. Only two years later the city fell amidst the greatest slaughter that had ever been up to that time. That, however, was only a partial fulfilment of the prophecy which is to be fulfilled on a larger scale at the end of this Age, in the destruction of the great systems of Christendom.

Verses 23-27 speak of the presence of Christ, and show that He will not appear again as a man, that they could say "He is in the desert," or that He is in some secret room. If anyone should tell us that He is here or there, that He can be located anywhere, then we are not to believe them. The presence will be everywhere, just like the sunshine that comes from the east unto the west. The word "lightning," used in the Authorised Version, allows of a wrong thought, and has misled many to think that the Lord will come like "lightning," which stays not for a moment. The Greek word means "bright shining," and is so translated in Luke 11:36. It is used in Revelation for lightnings, but it undoubtedly here refers to the "bright shining" of the Sun of Righteousness. It is a beautiful illustration of the presence of Christ. Those awake and watching may see the glories of the rising sun for some time, even before it rises above the horizon. How it dispels the gloom and darkness, just as the Sun of Righteousness arising will disperse the dark night of sin and sorrow, of superstition and error, and bring healing in its wings. (Mal. 4:2.)

Thus the Lord would guard us from the many deceptions which were to be, and undoubtedly are, prevalent in this our day. The question of the disciples was: "What shall be the sign of Thy 'parousia,' presence?" not a sign of His arrival and departure, like the lightning. The Lord adds, "So shall the presence of the Son of man be." Lightning has no presence: it is simply a flash and gone.

Verse 28 indicates that there is to be a feast, just as eagles or carrions feed upon flesh; so those who hunger and thirst after righteousness and truth will be found where the food is (see also Luke 12:37; Rev. 3:20).

Verses 29-31 seem to refer to the tribulation of God's people during the dark days of Papal persecution and martyrdom foretold by Daniel 7:25. This great desolating power received its deadly wound by Napoleon. Its power to "tread down the saints" was broken in 1799. There have been the literal demonstrations, in the literal heavens in the notable dark days of 19th May, 1780 (sun darkened), and in the wonderful showers of falling stars of 13th

November, 1833, as though to draw attention to the more important fulfilment of this prophecy in the fact that the Gospel light has been darkened by false teachings, such as Evolution, Higher Criticism, etc., and that the clear shining of the writings of the apostles, the twelve stars, has been beclouded by destructive heresies. Then the powers of the heavens (the religious systems) shall be shaken. There has been a general disintegrating process at work throughout Christendom. When we see such processes at work, we may take that as a sign of His presence. This is in line with our Lord's parable, "Let both (wheat and tares) grow together until the harvest" (the end of the Age), when He would send His messengers to gather the tares in bundles to burn them, and to garner the wheat. The trumpet would refer to the proclamation of truth by which the separation would take place. Then will come the great time of trouble, "all the tribes of earth shall mourn."

Verses 32-35 give another sign, this one on earth. The separating of the wheat from the tares is a work in the "heavens," the religious world. The sign of the fig tree budding is of the earth, and refers to the nation of Israel, which has come into Divine favour; surely Israel's hopes are budding again. When we see all these things, know that it is near. That is, the generation seeing all these signs of Christ's presence shall not pass until the great trouble has occurred, and the Kingdom of righteousness and peace has been established.

Verses 36-39. These verses clearly indicate that just as Noah was a preacher of righteousness for 120 years before the Flood, so Christ would be present for some time before the great calamity which is to destroy the world systems of this evil day. Noah preached and warned, but they went on with their own selfish pursuits, regardless of the message. They "knew not."

2 Pet. 3:3-7, 10, 12, 13 foretell similar conditions; and are not these conditions with us today? Luke 17:26-30 also mentions the conditions in Sodom and Gomorrah, and they also refused the message in the days of Lot, and both Matthew and Luke state that "as it was in the days of Noah" and "in the days of Lot," so also shall it be in the days of the Son of man. Thus the Scriptures clearly declare that Christ would be present for some time prior to the great calamity, although only the watchers would know of His presence. All others, as in the time of Noah and Lot, are not to know.

It is important thing is to watch, for no one should know the day nor the hour of the Lord's arrival, nor of the actual time when the great time of trouble will overwhelm the world.

The Lord did not inform the disciples so that the Church might fix dates for future events. In answer to the query, "when shall these things be?" He simply has given the signs of His presence and told us to -watch," so that we may

discern His presence when He has come. Then we may enter the feast of spiritual things which He has promised to His waiting people, and will be one by one called away to be with the Lord “in the air.”

Before He will set up His Kingdom He will gather His elect from the four winds of heaven. Then the saints are to share the glorious work of that Kingdom of peace. Satan, however, must first be bound, and the Church are to have something to do in thin connection, for the promise is, “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” Then, the time of trouble over, the Prince of Peace shall reign from shore to shore, and the prayer will be answered, “Thy Kingdom come: Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.” (Rev. 21:1-4.)

Following this highly figurative statement of prophecy in answer to the disciple’s question respecting His .second presence, the Lord gives three illustrative parables which indicate progressive conditions and work that will occupy Him on His return.

The “Ten Virgins” parable , shows the proper attitude of the watching Christians and how some will fail.

The Parable of the —Talents” shows how the Lord will have a work to do among Christians, in winding up the affairs of the Gospel Age, completing the number of God’s elect.

The Parable of “The Sheep and the Goats” then follows, showing the work of the Kingdom Age, when the Church, with Christ, are to judge the world during that thousand years’ reign (1 Cor. 6:2). Matt. 25:31 very distinctly informs us that the parable is applicable to that time. “Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate one from another.”

For nearly 1900 years God has been judging and selecting the Church, for the “High calling in Christ Jesus.” During that thousand years’ reign of Christ the whole world will have the advantage of the judgments of the Lord, and Isaiah 26:9 states that “when Thy judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” (Psalm 22:27, 28.)

Those rightly exercised by the favourable conditions of that time of blessing (Psalm 72; Isaiah 35) will develop hearts of love and care for their fellows, but others of the goat nature will not respond, but will think only of their own selfish ease and pleasure.

The righteous do kindness by nature without thinking of it, the unrighteous never think of doing kindness that will involve any cost or sacrifice. Eternal life is only designed for such as become righteous, such as are restored to “the image and likeness of God,” lost by the first Adam, but restored to all the willing and obedient by the Second Adam. Time and space would fail to tell of the blessings of that glorious Kingdom of Christ. No wonder the angels sang “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and goodwill towards men,” and said, “Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”

The righteous receive eternal life and enter into the Kingdom “prepared for them from the foundation of the world”—Paradise—the earthly home. The wicked will be cut off for ever. They have been redeemed from the Adamic sentence of death by the Cross of Christ, but will again incur the death penalty—the second death from which there is no redemption. It will be an everlasting punishment. The Greek word signifies a “cutting off” as a branch is lopped off a tree. There is no life for humanity apart from Christ, who, “by the grace of God tasted death for every man.” (Concluded.)

Melbourne Christmas Convention.

The Brethren in Melbourne wish to announce that their Annual Christmas Convention will be held this year (D.V.) from Friday, 25th December, to Monday, 28th December, with further meetings on New Year’s Day. These gatherings will be held in the Masonic Hall, 254 Swan Street, Richmond, and an invitation is extended to all friends able to attend these assemblies in the Lord’s name. Further information may be obtained from the secretary — Mr. J. B. Hiam. 44 Heath Ave., Oakleigh, S.E. 12, Victoria.

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