



Volume XXXV. No. 12 MELBOURNE, DECEMBER, 1952 Price—Fourpence Halfpenny

## Can the Living Talk with the Dead?

(This article is published by request.)

IN ONE of Melbourne's radio papers the claim was made in recent times that the spirit of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle would speak at a particular spiritualistic seance, arranged by a certain radio announcer. After this seance the same radio paper reported as follows:—"Although direct contact with Sir Arthur was not made, the famous author and spiritualist ,spoke through a lifetime friend, now also deceased."

The above claim, and others of similar nature, no doubt make great impressions on many people, the majority of whom do not consult the Bible to prove the possibility of departed friends being - able to communicate with anyone on earth. In this article the teachings of the Bible are presented on this most important subject—"Can the Living Talk with the Dead?"—and it is hoped that it may solve any difficulties in the minds of any of our readers, as well as confirm the truth on this question in the minds of all who are walking in the steps of our Lord.

It may be asked, What could be the motive in the desire of anyone to communicate with a departed relative or friend? At once we realise it is the heart-desire not to be separated from loved ones; in other words, there is a longing, a yearning for a continuation of those tender ties which rightly bind loved ones together on earth. Thus, we see clearly, that this fellowship with dear relatives and friends was never intended to be broken; in other words, we were never intended to die, and mankind would never have died had there been obedience to a loving Creator by our first parents.

"The wages of sin is death" is the Scriptural declaration throughout the Word of God, but it is the longing and yearning within the human breasts for lasting association with loved ones, which, while right in itself, can lead to the greatest deception possible, when the truths of God's Word are either ignored or misunderstood. And, strange as it may seem, it is nevertheless true, that God permits misunderstanding of His Word, or ignorance of its truths, in all who are not sincere enough to really wish to know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Possibly we have all met people, who, in their bereavement, are so strongly influenced by the desire to continue in contact with a departed loved one; so absorbed with the desire to receive a message as to the welfare of the one beyond, that they completely isolate themselves from God and His Word. In other words, they want their own will done, they want their own desires fulfilled, irrespective of what God's plan is, and what God has decreed is best for His human family. Satan, of course, is active to take advantage of all who are so minded, and Paul tells us of such that "God shall send them a strong delusion that they should believe a lie," while in this state of mind, "Because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."-2 Thes. 2:10, 11.

Let us now examine the Apostle Paul's wonderful presentation of the subject of death and the future life, found in 1 Corinthians 15.—"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's, at his presence." (1 Cor. 15:12-23.)

What, we ask, are the two outstanding facts Paul presents in the above passage of Scripture? They are, that both Death and the Resurrection are real, are absolutely true. So true is death, says Paul, that if there be no resurrection, then all hope of future life is lost. Does Paul contradict other statements in the Bible? Does he disagree with Christ? No, he does not! Who, then, would set themselves up as authorities and contradict Christ, Paul, and all the true servants of God? There are thousands of preachers who are doing this, by proclaiming the immortality of the soul; in other words, they are declaring that there is no death, when the Scriptures plainly state, "The wages of sin is death."

However, does someone say there are passages in the Bible which seem to indicate that those passed on in death are still living? Yes, we admit that some parts of God's Word, on the surface, seem to so teach; but no one is entitled to form any conclusion, on any subject, on a mere surface reading of the Scriptures. Let us investigate. Turning to Matthew, chapter 17, we read:—"After six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias, talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here, if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." (Matt. 17:1-4.) At first thought it would appear that Moses and Elias were there with Jesus and the three disciples on the mount, but reading on to verse 9 of this chapter we find the words—"And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead." "Tell the vision to no man," and at once it will be seen that the transfiguration on the mount was a picture, or representation, of some important event Jesus wished to impress upon the minds of the three disciples. Turning to verse 28 of the previous chapter, we read our Lord's words—"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." Here, then, is the explanation of the "vision" on the mount. Our Lord presented a picture of the kingdom to the minds of the disciples, Moses and Elijah being made to pass before their mental vision to represent the two phases of the kingdom, while of course these two ancient servants of God were dead in reality, and are still dead until the resurrection day. It will be seen, then, that the passage in Matthew 17 is describing in picture form a very important part of God's plan, just as the Apostle Paul was "caught up to the third heaven" in vision-2 Cor. 12:1-4—and the Apostle John received the wonderful Revelation of Jesus Christ, while he was "in the spirit on the Lord's day."

It is important to note how clearly the Scriptures describe the death condition of the ancient servants of God, as well as those who lived since our Lord's first advent. Of David, the one "after God's own heart" we read—"So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David." And again, of Solomon it is recorded—"And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father." (1 Kings 2:10; 11:43.) These are but samples, describing the death of the human race, the word "sleep"

being used to represent the hope of an awakening from the sleep of death in the resurrection morn; which hope God had already purposed in His great Plan of the Ages, long before Christ paid the penalty of death registered against mankind, to effect their liberation in due time.

Now, in Acts, chapter 2, we find a most interesting and informative contrast between Christ and David presented by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost. After describing how the Lord had been taken and by wicked hands had been crucified and slain, Peter declared—"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." How differently, however, does he present the truth concerning David, as follows—"Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. For David is not ascended into the heavens. " (Acts 2:24, 29, 34.) No, indeed; David, along with mankind, was in the sleep of death when Peter spoke, but not so our Lord Jesus Christ. And if further confirmation of the condition of death is required, surely the words of Jesus should be fully sufficient—"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even. the Son of man." (John 3:13.) Our Lord spoke these words in prospect of His ascension which took place after He had paid the penalty of death on behalf of fallen humanity.

How important it is to realise, also, that even Christ's resurrection from death was not immediate, when He died on the cross. Our Lord had repeatedly informed His disciples that He would be killed and the third day He would rise again, (Matt. 20:18, 19), and the Apostle Paul makes this matter very plain in the opening verses of his wonderful resurrection chapter to the Corinthians—"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:3, 4.) (See also Rev. 1:18.)

How clear it is that our Lord was actually dead until the third day after His crucifixion; He knew nothing; He had gone to the Bible hell to pay the death penalty against mankind. Thus, the thief on the cross who had asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom did not go to paradise that same day, inasmuch as Jesus was in the death condition until the third day. However, the thief will be "remembered" when paradise is established on earth in the kingdom age, and the general resurrection takes place at that time. Our Lord's own words are—"Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28, 29.) As Paul also declared—"There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." (Acts 24:15.) The just, or those who have done good, will come forth to the heavenly inheritance; while the unjust, or those who have done evil, will be raised up out of death as human beings on earth, "to learn righteousness, when the Lord's judgments are abroad in the earth." (Isa. 26:9. See also Acts 17:31.)

It is helpful also to note ,the record concerning Stephen, the first Christian martyr, as presented in Acts 7:60—"And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." Yes, and Paul's statement to the Thessalonians is in full agreement.—"I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." (1 Thes. 4:13, 14.) This is a comforting message indeed, to know that those who had passed away in the Lord all down the Gospel Age would be abundantly provided for in the first resurrection, at our Lord's second advent. The Apostle Paul had 'the same hope for himself, as he did not expect to receive his reward when he died; he knew he had to sleep in death until the resurrection morning.—"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. 4:8.)

Therefore, it is absolutely impossible to communicate with departed relatives or friends; the dead are dead; “the dead know not anything.” “There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.” (Eccles. 9:5, 10.) The only hope of future life, then, is based upon the resurrection of the dead, and this is a gift of God, through the sacrifice of Christ.—“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 6:23.)

What shall we say, then, about supposed messages from those beyond the veil of death? There is one passage of Scripture in the Old Testament in particular which has given considerable concern to some people, and which it would be well to examine. It is found in 1 Samuel 28, and records an interview between Saul and the witch of Endor.

In brief, Saul had been forsaken by the Lord and sought information from this woman who was under the influence of evil spirits; this can be proved by a careful reading of the whole passage. This woman, or spiritualistic medium, was deceived by the evil spirits into thinking that she was receiving a message for Saul from the deceased prophet Samuel. Saul was also deceived by the procedure, for of course Samuel was dead, and could not be interviewed. The wicked spirits, having fuller information than humans about events taking place in the life of Saul, gave the witch the message, supposedly from Samuel, which Saul himself expected, in view of his departure from the favor of God. This witch was herself deceived, and thus we have in this incident the basis for all the deceptions today in spiritualistic seances, and other false systems where the evil spirits hold sway.

In Genesis 6 we have the record of some of the heavenly angels taking human form, remaining on earth and marrying the daughters of men, contrary to the will of God. These, at the time of the Flood in Noah’s day, returned to spirit form, and have since been restrained from appearing as human beings. The Apostle Jude writes of these wicked angels as follows:—“The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.” (Jude 6.) The Apostle Peter also writes of these fallen angels in 2 Peter 2:4,—“God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to tartaroo (the earth’s atmosphere), and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.”

These fallen angels work in darkness only, but they deceive all those who go into darkness to obtain their information which is thought to be truth. These wicked angels impersonate the dead, and deceive the witches or mediums as well as those who seek for their messages instead of searching the Word of God for information on any subject. Some people have been known to visit spiritualistic mediums as a means of entertainment, or in a lighthearted manner for some amusement, but such are truly playing with fire. On receiving messages which are found to be true, and which the mediums could not have known without superhuman information, the unsuspecting are often caught in the subtle deceptions and are thoroughly deceived, so that it is only with great difficulty that they could ever free themselves, even if they felt the power holding them was from an evil source. Such is the unhappy condition of a great number of mediums; having given themselves over to the power of the evil spirits, they are under the sway of the devils to such an extent that they feel they must go on and permit their bodies to be used by the unseen powers of evil. Only by the Lord’s power and a determination to resist these fallen angels steadfastly by communion with the Lord in prayer, could anyone be delivered from their domination. How much better it is to shun all association with any systems of men whose teachings support Satan’s lie, “Ye shall not surely die,” in opposition to God’s decree—“Dying thou shalt die,” and “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

How evident it is that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was deceived during his life-time by the fallen angels, and his name is still used to try and impress this error upon all other unsuspecting people who do not take the Bible as their guide in the present life, nor to understand the hope for that life which is to come.

The Apostle Peter explains our Lord's great example to these wicked spirits in prison in 1 Pet. 3:18-20,—  
"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit. By which also he preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient ..

. in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." Our Lord preached by His faithfulness in sacrifice for humanity, even the death of the cross, and His wonderful resurrection to the Father's throne would also greatly impress these fallen angels, and possibly assist them to repent and return to God's favor when they have the opportunity in the Kingdom Age. Of this time when the fallen angels will be judged, we read—"Know ye not that we {the saints, with Christ} shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6:3.)

Further, the Apostle Paul reveals that the faithful saints are also an example to the evil angels, as well as to men, during this Gospel Age. He declares—"For I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." (1 Cor. 4:9.) It is a searching thought to realise that the conduct of God's people, when favorable, could even influence those angels which still seek to deceive mankind and keep them from the truths of God's Word.

And so, it is appropriate for the Lord's people to ask themselves, What kind of a spectacle are we presenting to angels and to men? Are we faithful to the truths of God's Word respecting the condition of the departed, as well as all other subjects? Are we assisting to counteract the erroneous teachings promulgated by fallen angels through deceived agents on earth? We remember the words of Paul—"I was not disobedient to the heavenly -vision"—and while we do not receive visions in the same manner as Paul, nevertheless, we receive heavenly truth as we are worthy and able to partake of it, and we also must be true in our witness, not presenting our own likes or dislikes, but the sure Word of God to all who have ears to hear. (See Rev. 20:4.)

## Melbourne Christmas Convention.

As announced previously the Annual Convention will be held (D.V.) in Melbourne for the four days 25th December to 28th December next, in Masonic Hall, 254- Swan Street, Richmond, and all friends interested in the Bible are welcome. Additional meetings will be held on New Year's Day in the same hall. Programmes are now ready, and further information is obtainable from the Class secretary—Mr. J. Hiam, 44 Heath Ave., Oakleigh, S.E.12, Victoria.

### Greeting Cards.

One of our brethren in the printing trade has kindly produced some Greetings Cards and sent them along with the request that the proceeds from the sale of them be donated to the General Tract Fund to assist in the work of the Institute. This is very much appreciated, in the service of the Lord.

There are five varieties of these cards as follows:—"Just for To-day," "One Here and There," "How Readest Thou?," "The New Leaf," and "The Best of Wishes—Faith—Hope—Love." It should be understood that these are not Christmas Cards, but are suitable for general greetings. The price is 3/- per dozen, post paid. Samples sent on request.

Tracts.

The article "Do World Events Foreshadow Armageddon?—Will Australia Be Involved?" which appeared in October's "Peoples Paper" is now available in tract form. A sample copy of this tract is enclosed with this month's "Peoples Paper" to all readers, and supplies may be obtained for wide distribution. Other tracts also available, such as "Freedom From Fear," "Refrain Thy Voice From Weeping," "Is Communism a Danger to Christianity?" etc.

Seldom can the heart be lonely,  
If it seek a lonelier still;  
Self-forgetting, seeking only  
Empty cups of love to fill.

'Twill not be a fruitless labour  
Overcome this ill with good;  
Try to understand your neighbour,  
And you will be understood.

PEOPLES PAPER AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

(Monthly) 4/6 (85 cents) per annum, post paid. Published by the Berean Bible Institute, Ermington Place, Kew, E.4, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

## The Model Prayer.

ALL OF OUR Lord's recorded prayers are beautiful in their simplicity, trustfulness and unselfishness; but the one usually termed "The Lord's Prayer," given as an example of a proper prayer, is certainly in every way a model, which we do well to follow closely in all our petitions. (Luke 11 :2-4; Matt. 6:9-13. )

Its opening address is full of filial reverence and trust—"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name!" What could be more sweet and childlike? What could be more reverent than this bold approach; direct to the throne of the heavenly grace?

It does not proceed hastily to the lesser -dings of a personal character, but, recognising that God takes knowledge of all of earth's affairs, and has a gracious and sufficient remedy already provided, the model prayer acknowledges this, and thus expresses faith and interest in God's plan as revealed in His Word, saying: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." Yes, indeed, it is not only fitting that all who approach

God in prayer should previously have searched to know something of what He has revealed concerning His will and plan, but also that after learning of it they should thus confess faith in God, that His plan, when fully executed, will more than meet all the necessities of our case. This is not a petition that God would bring in His Kingdom before His appointed time, nor an expression of an impatient longing for it, but an expression of hope and trust and patient waiting for that which we know will more than meet all proper expectations, and fulfil all the promises of God's Word. It also signifies our allegiance to the Kingdom and its laws and spirit, and hence implies that so far as we are concerned, we will do all in our power to conform our lives to its precepts even now.

Then, coming to personal desires, it requests only the necessities—the "bread and water," which God assures us shall be sure to all who are truly His. It asks, "Give us this day our daily bread." The request is not for wealth, nor Luxuries, nor overplus, nor dainties and delicacies. It is simply an acknowledgment of God as the great Provider, and of our reliance upon Him and His promises, leaving quantity and quality and everything else to divine wisdom and love, to be ordered for our highest good.

Although our sins have been forgiven, and we have been received into the family of God as sons before we have any right to pray "Our Father," yet we are very humbly to feel that we stand as 'sons' by grace in Christ, and not in merit of our own. We therefore appropriately acknowledge that we are trespassers, daily, who do not and cannot do the will of God perfectly, praying, "Forgive us our trespasses," our shortcomings.

Next we acknowledge a principle of God's justice, that mercy will be extended through Christ only in proportion as we realise the spirit of divine mercy, and are willing to exercise it toward others who come short of perfection in their dealings with us; hence we add, "as we forgive those who trespass against us." This is equivalent to a bargain with God, that we accept His terms of mercy, and will expect none, except as we ourselves exercise it toward others. What a thought! If fully appreciated, how it would influence all of God's sons to be kind and generous toward each other and toward all men in thought as well as in word and deed.—See Matt. 5:24; 6:15 :

"And lead us not into temptation"; or, rather, since chastisements and temptations (or trials) are necessary to our discipline and preparation for the Kingdom (James 1:2-12), we must understand this as the "Emphatic Diaglott" renders it, "Abandon us not to trial." Since the trial of our faith worketh patience, experience and hope (1 Pet. 4:12; Rom. 5:3-5), and is needful for our perfecting in holiness (1 Pet. 1:6, 7),

the Father will not hinder us from having temptations, even though He Himself tempteth no man. (James 1:13.) A man is tempted when he is led astray and enticed by his own selfish, fallen desires; he sins when he yields to those desires. (James 1:14.) But in the hour of trial, temptation, who could come off conqueror without the promised “grace sufficient for every time of need,” which will succour us and not permit us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but will with the temptation provide also a way of escape? —1 Cor. 10:13.

“But deliver us from evil,” or, as some prefer it, “Deliver us from the Evil One.” The great Adversary is as much on the alert to entrap us through the weaknesses of the flesh as our Lord is ready to deliver us and give us victory. We are not sufficient of ourselves for such a contest against the powers of darkness, and hence have need frequently of this petition to the throne of grace, for as the Apostle declares, “our sufficiency is of God.” —2 Cor. 3:5.

[ The remaining sentence with which this prayer is usually closed is spurious—not found in the ancient Greek M.S.S. It would appear to have been added at the time when an earthly exaltation of the Church had led some to believe that the Papal glory was the glory of God's Kingdom.]

New Telephone Number.

The Berean Bible Institute, and Frank and Ernest broadcasts have a new telephone number in Melbourne —WY 3500.

January's 'Peoples Paper.'

It' is expected that a booklet will take the place of January's “Peoples Paper” and this will be posted out with the February number of the “Paper.”

## Watch and Pray.

Communion with the Lord in prayer brings:

- Increased confidence in the Lord's supervision of our affairs.
- Increased faith in all the great and precious promises of His word.
- Increased realisation of His leadings, past and present.
- Increased love for all the Brethren in Christ.
- Increased solicitude for their welfare and spiritual progress.

The Divine object in answering prayer is that we may have a stimulation of faith in connection with our receiving daily blessing, both temporal and spiritual.

“Our Lord’s Great Prophecy.”—Most helpful explanation of this timely subject,. 50 pages, paper cover, price 9d.; 6 copies for 4/-.

“The Plan of God—in Brief.”—This 104-page booklet covering the main features of God’s Plan of the Ages. Most helpful; heavy paper cover, price 1/-; 6 copies for 5/-.

“The Lord is My Shepherd.”—The beautiful 23rd is explained in a very helpful manner in this booklet of 24 pages. Price 5d. per copy; 6 copies for 2/-, posted.

“Peace Desired—War Continues.”—In this booklet of 24 pages the present world outlook is reviewed, and the only hope for peace set forth in the light of God’s Word. Price 5d. per copy; 6 copies for 2/-, posted.

“Do the Dead Know Anything”—The full and satisfactory answer to this question is given from the Bible in this 24- page booklet. Price 5d. per copy; 6 copies for 2/-, posted.

FRANK & ERNEST TALKS Geelong, 3GL, 222 M. Sundays 10 a.m.

Sydney, 2KY; 294 M. , 8.15 a.m.

Brisbane, 4KQ, 435 9 a.m.

Perth, 6KY, 227 M. 4.45 p.m.

## Gathering at Geelong.

A helpful time was experienced in Geelong, 45 miles from Melbourne, on the afternoon and evening of Saturday, 22nd November, when a number of the Melbourne friends joined the members in Geelong for fellowship around the

Word of God.

A Bible study on Eph. 2:1-7 proved encouraging and instructive as the main features of the high calling were brought out from the Apostle’s helpful presentation in this passage. It was seen that as a result of God’s great mercy those who come in the appointed way, through faith in Christ’s sacrifice, may have the privilege of presenting their justified humanity to God in sacrifice. God’s acceptance of the offering would result in the “quickening,” begetting of the holy spirit, for the heavenly inheritance. All such are then privileged to dwell with Christ in the heavenly places, as they feast upon the spiritual truths which will nourish the new life in preparation for the first resurrection, which will be gained by all who prove faithful unto death in the steps of Christ.

Three addresses added encouragement also, and all present seemed to enjoy the occasion, and gave thanks to the Lord for His blessing upon the gathering. The Love Feast, with appropriate hymns and closing prayer, concluded a profitable day of refreshing on spiritual things.

## A Lamp for the Footpath.— (J. R. Miller.)

God's word as a guiding lamp is a lamp unto our feet, not a sun flooding a hemisphere. It is not meant to shine upon miles and miles of road, but in the darkest night it will always show us the one next step; then when we have taken that, carrying the lamp forward, it will show us another step, and thus on till it brings us out into the full, clear sunlight of coming day. It is a lamp, and it is designed to lighten only little steps, one by one. We need to learn well the lesson of patience if we would have God guide us. He does not lead us rapidly. Sometimes we must go very slowly if we wait for Him. Only pace by pace does He take us, and unless we wait we must go in darkness. But if we wait for Him, it will always be light for one step.

### By Thy Words.

"There goes a man I envy," said a young man to an older companion. "You envy him? I wonder why," was the reply. "Oh, he is so smart and clever and says such witty things about people." "Yes," said his companion, "he says many clever and cutting things. I have never heard him say anything kind."

How much better it would be to emulate those who, like the Master, give utterance to "gracious words," helpful, comforting and encouraging. How often retorts are made in desire to appear clever, which wound deeply. What pain can be caused by one careless word, and what comfort and pleasure can a kind word fittingly spoken bring to the hearer.

## The Babe of Bethlehem Good Tidings to all People.

THE STORY of the birth of Jesus is always refreshing and stimulating to the followers of the Master, no matter how often it is related, though of course this subject comes more particularly before the minds of God's people at this time of the year. Had our Heavenly Father so desired He could have sent our Lord to earth as a fully mature man to pay the sacrifice for the sins of mankind, but apparently God saw some good purpose in Jesus being born as a babe, and spending thirty years in contact with fallen humanity as He grew up to manhood's estate.

When we read that Christ was "touched with the feeling of our (the Christians') infirmities," (Heb. 4:15), during the 31 years of His ministry, following His consecration at thirty years of age, we can understand better how He is our sympathetic and faithful High Priest, able to succor with tender feelings all His dear people who strive to walk in His steps of sacrifice. Likewise, the thirty years of knowledge of sinful humanity, which our Lord gained by close contact with the fallen race, no doubt confirmed His desire to endure all things necessary to redeem such a world of sinners lost and ruined by the fall, in addition to delighting to do His Father's will, and at the same time would more perfectly fit Him to become the Mediator between God and mankind when the great work of restitution commences in the age to come.

There can be no doubt that knowledge gained by experience is the most valuable to all God's creatures, and the length of time during which this valuable knowledge is attained and acted upon is usually a test of fidelity as to the worthiness of the recipients. In our Lord's case we may reason that during the thirty years, from His birth as the babe to the time of His consecration, He would have ample time to meditate upon His great mission to earth, and if ever there entered a thought in His mind to repudiate His contract with His Heavenly Father to redeem mankind by His death, we know there was ample time for it to germinate in those thirty years of waiting. The fact that Jesus so fully delighted to do God's will and entered into complete consecration immediately He attained manhood's estate at thirty years of age,

proves at once that the waiting time on earth confirmed the devotion of our Redeemer to God's plan for Him.

Further, the fact that our Lord did not complete His sacrifice until after 34 years of "bearing His cross" adds weight to the Apostle's declaration concerning Christ—"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience (proving His obedience) by the things which he suffered. ' (Heb. 5:8.) During this period in which our Redeemer "poured out His soul unto death" there was ample time again for regret that such an undertaking had been entered upon, had there been the slightest inclination in that direction. The tempter was of course resisted so resolutely at the beginning of Christ's ministry that there was never an opportunity to return with his subtle deceptions, and God's will that our Lord spend a period of time "enduring the cross, despising the shame," revealed the knowledge and wisdom of God that true faithfulness is a quality of character which increases with the passing years, despite the experiences permitted by an all-loving Heavenly Father.

So it is with all God's true servants, even with those whom God used over the centuries prior to our Lord's first advent; they proved their obedience over lengthy periods of devoted service, yet there was freedom of choice, as the Apostle declares—"And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned." (Heb. 11:15.) In other words, if Abraham had regretted answering God's call to—"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee," (Gen 12:1), he had full opportunity to return, for God does not coerce any of His servants.

Likewise, the followers of the Master during this Gospel Age, down to our own day, are necessarily tried and proved over quite lengthy periods of time in most cases, just as was our Lord and Forerunner, and God's ancient people. So, as we approach another Christmas season and the opening of another year, we do not do so with any feeling that the Christian way is long and tiresome. Rather do we give thanks to our Heavenly Father for His blessings and privileges in the service of our Master, and take the opportunity of using another Christmas season for witnessing to the angel's message which was proclaimed at the birth of our Lord as the babe of Bethlehem,—"Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." (Luke 2:10.)

What scope of truth does this prophetic message open up for the Lord's people to proclaim to those who have ears to hear; what joy thrills our hearts as we think upon the lowly birth of Jesus, God's Messiah, coming to earth as the helpless babe, spending thirty years away from "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was," and then enduring the further 31 years of "contradiction of sinners against himself," and being "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," because of His delight to co-operate in the Father's plan of "bringing many sons unto glory," and "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." What joy also it is to realise and proclaim that following our Lord's great sacrifice "God also bath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." (Phil. 2:9.) "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:25.) And what a privilege to make known that following the raising up of this "people for God's name" to the heavenly inheritance, that the "good tidings of great joy," of salvation from sin and death, should indeed be to all people—all the families of the earth—during the "times of restitution of all things." It is well to be reminded of the words of our Lord—"He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved," (Matt. 24:13), and this enduring is not of a passive nature. No, the Lord requires His people to exercise zeal and activity in His service over any length of time it may be His good pleasure to grant. What if the harvest of the Gospel Age has continued longer than some of God's people thought it would twenty, thirty, forty or more years ago? Has not the longer time than expected proved a great blessing in the Lord's vineyard? Truly it has for those rightly exercised by His spirit. Apparently the extra time has been very truly required to find the remaining grains of "wheat" for the heavenly garner, and the members enduring well on earth have had their lives sanctified, and their

characters mellowed and enriched with the passing years.

May the coming Christmas season be a means of blessing to all whose hearts and minds are lifted up to God in praise and thanksgiving for the gift of our Redeemer, our Saviour, Christ the Lord, who came as the babe of Bethlehem so long ago. Yes, “though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became Poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.” (2 Cor. 8:9.) Some of our brethren will be assembling in Conventions over this Christmas period at hand, others will be gathering in their home classes, others are isolated, but wherever God’s people dwell, there also will His spirit dwell, as they seek to serve Him in spirit and in truth, by meditating upon His Word, for their own upbuilding, proclaiming the glad tidings to others, and generally “redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

## A Christmas Prayer for You.

I will pray this prayer today for you,  
May the love of God abide with you;  
Wherever you go, wherever you stay,  
May the peace of God bless you today;

And throughout the year that lies ahead  
May beautiful flowers of joy be spread,  
Through your Christmas-tide and New Year too  
May the love of God abide with you.

He who goes about doing God’s will, goes about clothed in God’s beauty.

—Luther.

## Question Box.

QUESTION—Can you explain the Saviour's words to Nicodemus,—''Except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'' (John 3:5.)

ANSWER—It is evident that the Lord was referring to the heavenly phase of the kingdom. The Jewish nation was a consecrated nation, a covenanted people. They were all baptised into Moses in the sea, and in the cloud when they left Egypt. God accepted them in Moses, the mediator of their Law Covenant, at Mount Sinai; but, at the time Jesus was speaking, they had forgotten their covenant; some were openly living as publicans and sinners, and many others were self-righteous hypocrites. John's ministry, therefore, was repentance and baptism for remission of sins—a return to God and to a recognition of the covenant made; the baptism signifying the repentance and reformation of heart and life. Nicodemus was a Jew, and no Jew could become a follower of the Lord Jesus and enter into the Kingdom until first he had experienced this reformation and had been baptised, "born of water." In addition to this there must be the begetting of the spirit, and then in the resurrection, the birth to the spirit nature—"born of the spirit." Only those who experience this complete reformation of heart and mind, and who are "changed" in the resurrection, will ever enter into the heavenly phase of the kingdom of God.

## New Address for Perth Meetings.

The secretary of the Perth Bible Class has advised that a new meeting hall has been procured for regular Sunday meetings at 3 p.m., and 5.45 p.m. as follows—The Literary Institute, 1st Floor, Corner Hay and Pier Street, Perth. All interested in the study of the Bible will be very welcome.

If none were sick, and none were sad,  
What service could we render?  
I think, if we were always glad,  
We scarcely could be tender.

Did our beloved never need  
Our patient ministration,  
Earth would grow cold, and miss indeed  
Its sweetest consolation.

If sorrow never claimed our heart,  
And every wish were granted,  
Patience would die, and hope depart  
Life would be disenchanted.

—Beaumont & Fletcher.

So adorn the doctrine, that those may be won by the life who will not be won by the word.

—F. R. Havergal.

Printed by Hickling & Powell Pty. Ltd..