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Earthquakes at the First Advent and Since-What Do They Mean?

(This article is published by request.)

THIS subject is brought more particularly to attention by the earthquakes in various parts of the world in recent times, including one experienced in South Australia earlier this year. Such happenings are rare in this country, and this fact helps to attract attention all the more when earthquakes do occur, and cause even greater consternation amongst the inhabitants than would be the case in those countries where earthquakes are prevalent. Where events, even of a serious nature, happen fairly regularly, the population becomes somewhat resigned to the occurrences, and accept the outcome as inevitable, unavoidable.

As an illustration, we have heard of the population of the various European countries becoming almost careless and indifferent to their safety after periods of bombing raids over those countries during the last great war—there was an apparent resignation to calamity, and an acceptance of the fact that death may claim them at any time. This same fact is in evidence in the world since the discovery of atomic energy. When the first atomic bombs were exploded towards the close of the last war, the effect on the world of mankind was staggering. Consternation reigned amongst the world's population at this new and destructive force which man had been permitted to harness, in this end of the age. But those explosions of a few years ago were as a child's firecracker in comparison with the mighty force of present-day hydrogen bombs: yet mankind is becoming used, and to a degree indifferent, to events growing bigger and bigger: and after one event, it takes much greater happenings to awaken or startle humanity.

We believe that this principle will be demonstrated in a very marked way in the closing of this "present evil world" or dispensation, in which earthquakes of a symbolic nature will play a very marked and important part in the Lord's plan to ultimately bring peace to the world of mankind, when humanity is sufficiently humbled to be able to truly value, for all time, that peace and happiness which the Lord alone can give.

At our Lord's first advent, the disciples came to Jesus on one occasion at the temple in Jerusalem, and we read in Matt. 24:1 that their object was to show him the buildings of the temple." Perhaps they were particularly proud of that temple in their minds it probably represented the height of stability and strength, and they possibly felt that such a structure, being God's house, may well represent the cause of the Master Himself, and would last forever. Can we realise their surprise and amazement when Jesus replied—"See ye not all these things? There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown

down.” What a thing for the Master to say about such a structure!

No wonder the disciples followed up our Lord’s words with further questions, as we have it recorded in the further verses in Matt. 24.—”Tell us, when shall these things be?” And the Lord answered, quoting in part—”Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.” It seems as though the Lord was impressing a very necessary lesson upon His disciples, namely, that all the greatest works of men, pictured by the temple and other mighty achievements, could not endure. In brief, He had really described the history of the Gospel Age, and while the “wars and rumours of wars” so aptly refer to mankind in their fallen and selfish ambitions, the literal famines, pestilences and earthquakes describe the imperfect climatic conditions of this “present evil world” in particular: and God has allowed these imperfections on every side I i tl7c express purpose of impressing the unfruitful results of disobedience, from the time of our first parents to our own day.

We call to mind God’s words at the time of disobedience in the Garden of Eden, recorded in Gen. 3:17-19. “Cursed is the ground for thy sake,” and all the famines, pestilences and earthquakes are part of the curse. However, in contrast, we have a record in the Scriptures when perfect conditions will beautifully and naturally prevail in the earth — when Christ’s kingdom is established and the curse is rolled away. It states—”The tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase.”—Ezek. 34:27.

It is of interest to note that the Greek word used (as also the Hebrew word) from which our English word “earthquake” is translated, means—commotion (of the air) a gale; (of the ground) an earthquake.” This is helpful and instructive, as on one occasion during our Lord’s first advent, we read in Matt. 8:24—”There arose a great tempest.- This word “tempest” is from the same Greek word as “earthquakes” in Matt. 24:7. From this Scriptural standpoint, the cyclones and tornadoes in various parts of the world are also earthquakes, just as much as the shaking of the earth itself.

Following the tempest (earthquake) recorded in Matt. 8, the next Scriptural reference to an earthquake is found in Matt-. 27:51, at the time of our Lord’s crucifixion. The outcome of this convulsion of nature is well described in verse 54, —”Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done (including the darkness over the land, verse 45), they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.”

What did the earthquake mean? Undoubtedly it was God’s method of revealing to Israel, and to the Roman occupants of Jerusalem, His great displeasure of the terrible act of crucifying Jesus. As, though God would say to Israel—Henceforth, your temple services are finished; the veil of the temple was rent, from the top to the bottom. God’s presence with Israel would no longer be manifest in the temple. Our Lord Jesus pointed forward to this very time by His words in John 4:20-23. So God’s use of the earthquake revealed His judgment upon Israel, striking fear into their hearts; and into the hearts of the Roman rulers.

Again, two days later, we read in Matt. 28:2 —”Behold, there was a great earthquake.” This further convulsion of nature, on the morning of our Lord’s resurrection, struck terror into the hearts of the keepers of the sepulchre, along with the appearance of God’s angel; but, on the other hand, heralded our Lord’s resurrection morning with joy to those disciples who came to the tomb of Jesus. This earthquake really signalled the time for the resurrection of Christ, the angel also rolling back the stone from the door of the sepulchre and proclaiming these words of comfort to the women—”Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said.”

Then, following the Lord’s manifestation of His power upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost, and Peter and John being brought before the Jewish council for their preaching, and healing of the lame man,

we read in Acts 4:31— "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together: and they were all filled with the holy spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness." This "shaking" was an evidence of God's presence to bless the disciples.

Quite a different lesson was intended of God when Paul and Silas came under the disfavour of magistrates and multitude of the people at Philippi, when Paul cast out the evil spirit from the young woman, as recorded in Acts 16:16-40. When the two followers of the Lord had been thrust into prison and their feet made fast in the stocks, we read in verses 25, 26— "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed." What a momentous happening! ! There were God's faithful servants praying and singing praises to the Lord, content to be counted worthy to suffer for His sake, and then "suddenly there was a great earthquake." Just to think of the terror struck into the hearts of the jailor, the magistrates and the population of that town; and the encouragement, support and vindication of Paul and Silas.

What did that earthquake mean? It meant in no unmistakable manner God's judgment against those opposing His true and courageous servants, and with the happy result that the jailor was converted when he realised, by that amazing experience, that God was speaking to him through that convulsion of nature. What an effect that demonstration of God's power had upon the population of Philippi, the outcome of which was the establishing of one of the churches of God's people, and to whom Paul, in later years, wrote in endearing terms.

Passing on to the Book of Revelation we find that the term "earthquake" is used symbolically in a number of places to refer to revolutionary upheavals. In one case, in Rev. 11:13, the reference is applied by Bible students to the French Revolution. Historians reveal the terrible slaughter of human lives in that upheaval, and the apprehension of the leaders of nations at that time was the danger that such an outbreak of human passions might spread throughout the world. It would seem that this "earthquake" was a pointer to events to be enacted worldwide at the end of this age.

From Rev. 6:12-17 we have presented a most comprehensive description of the closing scenes of this Gospel Age, given through various symbolic terms, commencing with, 'And lo, there was a great earthquake.' "The sun,- "moon" and "stars- are appropriate symbols referring to the decline in appreciation of the sunlight of truth, even by the leading lights (stars) in the religious heavens—their fall to the ground indicating their departure from spiritual truths. 'Ultimately the "heaven- itself is said to depart, this reference being to the overthrow of the ecclesiastical heavens —the nominal church, mother and daughters. Departing as a scroll would indicate the process of being rolled together, possibly by amalgamation first of all, and then as the Apostle Peter declared —"passing away with a great noise." (2 Pet. 3 :10.) The "mountains" (governments of earth) are also shown to be moved out of their places, shaken down as the result of this great "earthquake- condition which will extend throughout the world. While all these events are under way, mankind of all stations in life will seek protection in one or another of the "dens and rocks (fortresses of society) of the mountains (governments) ." No lasting protection will be available, because the Lord has decreed that all systems of men must be removed from the earth, to make way for Christ's Kingdom. From the words of Psa. 46:6 we read—"The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved ; he (God) uttered his voice, the earth melted," And all these events are said to follow as a result of "a great earthquake" — a tremendous upheaval, that will shake down all the systems of men — political, social, financial and religious.

In the following chapter of Revelation (7:1-3) , we are given another picture of the closing scene of this Gospel Age, and the forces to be used are described as "the four winds of the earth.- These "winds" are shown as being restrained, held back, until a most important work of this Gospel Age is accomplished—"the sealing of the servants in their foreheads.- Not that the Lord will delay any feature of His plan to

comply with the desires of any of His earthly people, but, in His providence, the holding back of the winds of trouble corresponds with the period of the sealing of the last members for the heavenly kingdom. As the meaning of the word “earthquake” includes that of a tempest, or mighty wind, so in this passage in Rev. 7, we have the symbolic earthquake depicted. The conclusion to be taken from this vision in chapter 7 is, that when the full number of God’s servants “are sealed in their foreheads”—made intellectually acquainted with all features of the truth—as well as their hearts sealed unto God, the time in God’s divine plan will have arrived to “hurt the earth, • the sea, and the trees.” In other words, for the blowing down, or removal of all institutions or systems of men which would interfere with the operation of the kingdom of Christ.

The Apostle Paul so clearly revealed the same truth in Hebrews 12, when he contrasted the rather terrifying experience that the Lord sent to accompany the inauguration of the Law Covenant, with the much greater shaking experiences that will accompany, the inauguration of the New Law Covenant. The Apostle declared—”Whose voice then shook the earth (in the days of Moses) ; but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken (margin— may be shaken) , as of things that are made (man-made)., that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” (Heb. 12:26, 27.)

Realising the unmistakable meaning of symbolic earthquakes in the Scriptures, it may be asked, What would literal earthquakes mean today? While at the first advent, at the time of our Lord’s death on the cross and His resurrection, it is very evident that God’s judgments were revealed through the particular convulsions of nature, and the same was true in the case of Paul; yet to-day, when an earthquake -occurs, whether it be in New Zealand, Japan, Greece, or in Australia, we would not attribute this to a judgment of God, but rather an evidence of imperfection still abroad in the earth, which, however, could remind us of the great judgments of God to come, when “this present evil world” will pass away to make way for “the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” (2. Pet. 3:13.)

While the world of mankind will be in great distress and perplexity, with the “sea and the waves roaring, and men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are’ coming on the earth, and the powers of the heaven being shaken,- the Lord’s people are reminded by the Lord. that “when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” (Luke 21:25, 26, 28.) Yes, indeed, how favoured are those whose hope is in the Lord, and to whom the Apostle Paul wrote so confidently—”Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”

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A Bomb No Nation Dare Test!

THE following article by W. S. Noble appeared in the Melbourne "Herald" on 22nd May, under the above heading. Can you imagine a cloud of death sweeping across the country, obliterating all life as it passes—silent, invisible, yet striking from the upper atmosphere with deadly rays against which there is no protection?

Imagine the scene in the wake of the cloud. The stillness of the countryside from which all life has disappeared, the desolate, empty streets of ghost cities whose inhabitants have been enfolded in a common doom. You probably think that is a mad nightmare, something from the realms of horror fiction. But to-day men who know what is going on in the laboratories and studies of nuclear scientists are beginning to believe that humanity may be faced with just such a threat.

For it is known now that the weapon capable of wiping out life over vast areas can be made any time some country gives the word for its production. It is the cobalt bomb, recently called by one man who had been given a glimpse of its potential terrors, "the most deadly weapon of all." It is so terrifying in its possibilities that sober scientists have called it "madness" to think of making one. For they know that with its entry into the range of nuclear weapons, man stands on the brink of disaster.

A few weeks ago Professor Marcus Oliphant, Director of the Research School of Physical Sciences at the National- University, Canberra, said: "Only madmen or devils would contemplate the use of cobalt bombs or other weapons designed to spread long-lived radioactivity over the earth. . . Only a devil would deliberately spread sterility and impotence among mankind, his own side included, or store up genetic monstrosities for the future."

The day in November, 1952, when the Americans first exploded a hydrogen device at Eniwetok atoll in the western Pacific saw the opening of the door to the cobalt bomb. The hydrogen bomb is not just a more destructive version of the atomic bomb. It is a bomb which gets its power from the fusion of atoms, instead of from splitting them, as in the A-bomb. Theoretically

It has no limitations to its explosive force. Already science has new terms to express the shattering power of the two types of bombs. An atomic explosion, which has a force equivalent to thousands of tons of TNT, is measured in "kilotons." But the hydrogen bomb reaches into a new range of power. This is recorded in "megatons," one megaton being equivalent to a million tons of TNT.

The cobalt bomb is a hydrogen bomb with a difference. The latter bombs which were exploded at Eniwetok were encased in steel, which became only mildly radio-active as it was vaporized in the heat and pressure of the blast. But a cobalt bomb would have a casing of cobalt surrounding both the hydrogen charge and the atomic bomb which acts as a hydrogen trigger. It is known from small scale laboratory tests that when cobalt is bombarded with neutrons it turns into an element which gives off deadly gamma rays, similar to X-rays. So, as the hydrogen bomb exploded within its cobalt casing, the cobalt would be turned into a gas that would become violently radio-active, spreading out into a cloud whose active ingredients were 320 times more active than radium. The cobalt bomb will never be tested. It is the one weapon with which no scientist may experiment, for no one could control the death cloud that would sweep outward from the explosion.

If ever a cobalt bomb is fired, it will be in war-time --and race suicide will have been let loose. The scientists have no doubt that the cobalt bomb can be made. Once the hydrogen bomb was successfully fired, the cobalt bomb automatically became practicable. There is no longer any comfort in the fact that

the hydrogen bomb, as originally made, was an enormously expensive weapon, possessed in its perfected form probably only by the United States. It has now been announced that any nation with a stockpile of atom bombs can convert them into hydrogen bombs by the addition of a relatively simple and abundant new chemical compound, called lithium 6 deuteride, or Li6D . It is a compound of a light isotope of lithium and a heavy isotope of hydrogen (deuterium).

The nuclear science writer of the "New York Times," William Laurence, says that the discovery makes all existing stocks of A-bombs obsolete, except for their role as "triggers" for the H-bomb. He adds: "A small fission-bomb stockpile, such as the one now possessed by Britain, could thus be transformed in a relatively short time into a gigantic stockpile in the billion-ton range. The Soviet Union also, of course, can, and will, do likewise. In fact, it is highly unlikely that it is not already doing just this."

It is claimed that a cobalt bomb could be made which would yield 71 tons of radio-active cobalt — equal to nearly five million pounds of radium. Such a bomb would be too big for any existing aircraft to carry. But if it were exploded from a raft in the Pacific, a thousand miles off the Californian coast, the radio-active cloud, carried by the eastward winds, would reach the mainland in about a day. Three or four days later it would have passed over New York and the east coast. Behind it most life in its path would have disappeared, killed by the rays shooting down from the radioactive dust.

Professor Harrison Brown, nuclear chemist at the Californian Institute of Technology, has calculated that cobalt bombs could be exploded on a north-south line, about the longitude of Prague, that would "destroy all life within a strip 1500 miles wide, extending from Leningrad to Odessa, and 3000 miles deep, from Prague to the Ural Mountains. Such an attack," he adds, rather unnecessarily, "would produce a scorched earth unprecedented in history."

Four years ago Professor Einstein was speculating about the chance that United States scientists would master the difficulties involved in producing the hydrogen bomb. Looking into the witches' cauldron which he already saw bubbling, he said: "Radio-active poisoning of the atmosphere, and hence annihilation of any life on earth, will have been brought within the range of technical possibilities." •

The above article truly reveals the extent to which mankind has advanced (?) in this twentieth century civilization. There can be no doubt in the minds of Bible students" that the great increase of knowledge, which has produced such amazing and terrifying inventions, was restricted until such time as these deadly weapons would not hinder, but rather accomplish the Lord's plan of salvation for mankind. It may seem strange to some minds to think of such destructive forces as the bombs above mentioned having any part in the Divine plan of salvation, but it is very clear in the Scriptures that God requires humanity to thoroughly humble itself to the dust, so to speak, before He brings in the restoration and blessing which will follow at the right time for the benefit of all truly seeking deliverance from the chaos and ruin of man's world-wide destruction.

Prior to the atomic age it was perhaps difficult to understand what forces could accomplish the "great tribulation" of which our Lord stated--"Except those days should be shortened, there should be, no flesh saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matt:24:21, 22.) While we do not know that the dreadful bombs will be used upon mankind in the last days of the age, yet the possibility of all flesh being destroyed could no longer be doubted but for the Lord's assurance that the days of great tribulation will be shortened, to prevent the destruction of all humanity, and additionally -for the elect's sake."

The shortening of the days of tribulation "for the elect's sake" seems to refer to the periods of easement between the various spasms of trouble over the last forty years in particular, thus allowing opportunities and privileges for the truth message to continue the "sealing in the forehead" of all the true servants of

God, before the winds of trouble are finally permitted to devastate the harvest-field. (Rev. 7:1-3.) The selection and development of all the Lord's people for the heavenly kingdom is of paramount importance, and God has provided that the shortening of the days of tribulation will work out this special feature of His plan, as well as save some of the human family from destruction.

With the great tribulation over, what relief there will be for those of humanity who have passed through the terrible experiences, but the blessings of Christ's Kingdom then established will quickly compensate and give that peace and contentment of heart and mind for which the poor groaning creation now longs and struggles to obtain by its own unavailing efforts. The lesson must be learned by all that only by full obedience to the Lord and His righteousness can true and lasting peace and happiness be established in the earth. Following the benefits to those who have passed through the great tribulation, the resurrection of all mankind will proceed in orderly manner, and the grand times of restitution of all things will progress on the restored earth throughout the thousand years of Christ's kingdom.

In the meantime the Lord's people may view each phase of the gathering storm of trouble with quiet confidence and trust in the Lord, well knowing that God's wisdom sees that the permission of this last and greatest tribulation the world has ever experienced will be in the best interests of the whole human family. The assurance also that the Lord will care for His people, and deliver them in His own good time and way to be associated with Christ in the work of the kingdom age, gives comfort and joy even amidst some of the travail which precedes the birth of the new order of things.

Salted With Fire.

(Mark 9:33-50.)

(Convention Address)

ONE of the effects of our Lord's instructions to His disciples was to teach them the necessity for self discipline.

On several occasions He pointed out in very clear language the terms of discipleship. (See Mark 8:34.) "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." To deny one's self is to say "No" to oneself: to refrain from a certain course of action, because we have learned that the outcome or result of such action would be detrimental to our highest interest, or maybe cause injury to another. To illustrate: When we were children, no doubt we were all fond of sweets. Then one day it was brought to our attention that sweets, especially those made from refined white sugar, were really harmful to our health, and we were urged in the interests of our health and wellbeing to cut down drastically our intake of sweets. In doing this, we found certain benefits came to us. We found we had' healthier bodies and minds, and therefore we could work better, and we were more able to help those around us. We found the discipline of self-denial brought a blessing to us.

Now, we find that this simple illustration of the child and the sweets may be used in respect of our Christian life and experience. During this Gospel Age, our Lord is calling a certain class of people—not chiefly the great or wise or noble of this world. In 1 Cor. 1:26-29 Paul describes the kind of people who are called of God to be disciples of Christ. Those who are true disciples have learned how unsatisfactory is the service of self and sin. We have heard the voice of Jesus saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you (become My disciples) and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." (Matt. 11:28, 29.) We have responded to this heavenly call. After accepting Christ as our Saviour from the Adamic condemnation we have heard the call to present our bodies .a living sacrifice, and we have received the begetting of the holy spirit. (Eph. 1:13.)

Those who have taken the step of full consecration, that is, their justified human nature presented to be dead with Christ, are said to be "in Christ." "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." (2 Cor. 5:17.) This "new creature" has a new will—a will to do God's will; but it can express itself only through the imperfect body. So, as Paul states it, -We have this treasure (this treasure of the new mind) in earthen vessels that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves." (2 Cor. 4:7.)

If we fully realise our weakness and imperfection, and our inability to accomplish anything without the strength, grace and help of our Lord and Head, we will feel very humble and dependent upon Him. We will realise that we can render acceptable service to God only as He is pleased to use us and give us the grace and strength which His holy spirit imparts. Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing," Again our Lord said, "If ye abide in my Word, then are ye truly my disciples, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Here we see that in order to be true disciples we must abide in Christ's Word.

In John 14:23 our Lord said, "If a man love me he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Those who abide in Christ's word, those who keep His word, are those who maintain in their hearts the spirit of consecration, the spirit of loving obedience to God, the spirit Which says, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Let us see that we maintain in our hearts this spirit of Christ, the spirit of discipleship, the spirit of loving obedience to the Word, and to the leadings of the spirit of God. Our Master said, "I delight to do thy will, O God; thy law is within my heart."

It is interesting to note the similarity of meaning of the two words “disciple” and “discipline.” Both these words are derived from the same Latin base which means “to learn.” According to the dictionary, the meaning of “disciple” is “One who receives instruction from another, a learner, a pupil.” The meaning of the word “discipline” is “Training, education, instruction and the government of conduct or practice; also, punishment inflicted by way of training and correction, instruction by means of misfortune, suffering, and the like, chastisement.”

How important it is that consecrated Christians should continue to be disciples, learners. We want to be willing learners, disciples indeed, disciplined disciples. Of course it is God, the great Husbandman, who instructs or disciplines His Church. Our part in the matter is to seek His grace and help to keep our hearts in the humble condition of learners. “My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ was a very keen disciple. See Isa. 50:4-6: “The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned (them that are taught, the instructed) . . . He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned,”—the disciplined. It was because our Saviour was such a good disciple, such a diligent and humble-hearted learner, that He was so highly favoured of the Father with the gift and grace of the spirit which enabled Him to manifest such a deeply sympathetic and understanding heart and mind. (See Heb. 5:8.) Our Lord learned obedience by the things which He suffered. Of course, Jesus Christ had always been obedient to the Father, but during His earthly life He manifested His perfect obedience to God under conditions of most crucial pain and suffering. The sufferings of our Lord in the flesh were permitted by a wise and loving Father, whose wisdom foresaw the necessity for those experiences of severe trial and testing, in order to equip His Son for the future position designed for Him by God. (See Heb. 2:17, 18; Phil. 2:3-9.)

Our Lord, then, was a thoroughly disciplined disciple of God. God taught Him to discipline Himself, and now God is asking us to follow in the steps of Christ. “Learn of me for I am meek and lowly of heart.” Just as our Lord Jesus yielded Himself to the leading of God’s holy spirit, so we also are constrained by the love of Christ to yield ourselves to His obedience. “As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:14.)

In Mark 9:42 our Lord shows how careful we should be not to cause offence or injury to one of His trusting disciples. Let us, like the Apostle Paul, seek to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man. Let us apply the Golden Rule and endeavour to “Treat others as we would be treated.- We should endeavour at all times to cultivate an appreciation of the rights and interests of others, and seek by the Lord’s grace to bring our thoughts, words and actions into line with His law of love. “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

In verses 43 and 45 our Lord gives us a warning—“If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; if thy foot offend thee, cut it off.” etc. Then in verse 47, “If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into Gehenna.” The meaning in each of these instances would seem to be the same. The “hand” may represent our work, our actions: we should see to it that our hands are clean, that we are true and honest and free from impurity in our actions. The “foot” may represent our walk, our manner of life; let us see that we are walking as the Lord would have us do. Are we walking worthy of our calling? Are we walking as Christ walked, following in His steps, setting our affections upon the things that are above? The “eye” may represent our motives, the hidden springs from whence come our words and actions. Our Lord said, “If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light.” How important it is to maintain the spirit of our consecration, to keep our hearts right, our motives pure, to keep the example of Christ and the great hope of our heavenly calling clearly before our minds.

Our Lord suggests as an illustration that the tendency to wrong doing which would prove an injury to others, might be a quality of character that would seem as close and precious to us as a right hand, or a foot, or an eye; it might be one form of wrong doing, or injury, or another form, but in every case those who would be followers of .he Prince of Peace and ultimately be His joint-heirs in the Kingdom, must, as good soldiers of righteousness, fight against all such sinful, selfish, injurious tendencies of the flesh. These must be combated to the extent that the new creature would be willing, indeed anxious, to destroy utterly that element of his fallen disposition which is contrary to the Master's good pleasure, even though it be at a sacrifice that would be illustrated by the loss of an eye, a hand, or a foot.

We are to put away such practices, that we may be truly our Lord's footstep followers, and be counted worthy to enter into and share His kingdom. If we will not do so, we cannot enter the kingdom. If we will hold on to these tendencies of the fallen nature, they will mean ultimately our destruction in the second death, for every person who has and who maintains an injurious character, a tendency to injure others, will be esteemed of the Lord wholly unfit for any part in His Kingdom--indeed unfit for eternal life at all. Hence the Lord's declaration that such would go into the fire or destruction eternal--the second death. No wonder, then that our Lord urged all who would be His disciples to put away from them, to mortify, the deeds of the body, the selfish instincts of the fallen nature, at any cost, no matter how dear, that they might enter into life with Him, as participants in the kingdom, as members of the Bride.

Our Lord urges that such a loss of an eye, or a hand, or a foot, as representing earthly advantages and privileges of the present time, would be far better than possessing these privileges, to be ultimately destroyed in Gehenna fire. Gehenna fire here refers primarily to the valley outside the city of Jerusalem, where all the offal was destroyed (not preserved or tortured) , and this symbolised or prefigured the general destruction of the second death associated with the New Jerusalem government of the Millennial Age, in which all the unworthy, all the offal, all the unfit, will be utterly destroyed in the second death, that the Lord may we a clean universe in which every creature would praise and honour Him and exemplify His law and character and government of love.

Verse 49—"For every one shall be salted with fire." In Lev. 2:13 we read that salt must be offered with all the sacrifices. All the offerings, all the sacrifices must be salted with salt. The salt was emblematic of purity, of preservation, and of fitting the offering for an acceptable sacrifice. So in this expression,"Every one shall be salted with fire," our Lord meant, every disciple shall be preserved by exercising the spirit of self-denial and self -sacrifice.

The disciples who were still natural minded men had just been disputing among themselves who should occupy the most important place in the kingdom, and the Lord told them the one who would be chief in the kingdom would be he who would be willing to serve the interest of the others most truly. "Every one shall be salted with fire." How important it is that we should be disciplined disciples. How important that we submit to the disciplines sent by our loving Heavenly Father. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him." While it is the great Husbandman who prunes the Vine, we must co-operate with Him and seek to learn the intended lessons. Paul says, "If we would judge ourselves we would not be judged," (of the Lord).

We are to judge ourselves, to examine ourselves, with the object of having our thoughts and words and doings in line with the Word and spirit of God, and with our consecration 'vows. To be "salted with fire" would convey the thought that as New Creatures we would be preserved by the fire of self-denial and self-discipline, in keeping ourselves from the gratification of self and selfish desires. As if the Lord had said,-- Look at the sacrifice on the altar.

It is an offering to God, about to be presented to Him. It is sprinkled with salt, emblematic of purity, of preservation, and of fitting it, therefore for a sacrifice." So you are devoted to God. You are sacrifices,

victims, offerings to Him in His service. To make you acceptable offerings, everything must be done to preserve you from the corrupting tendencies of self-gratification. The fire of self-discipline and self-denial is the proper preservative in the service of God. "Have salt in yourselves." Have the preserving, purifying principle always, the principles of self-discipline and self-denial, of suppressing pride, ambition, contention, etc., and thus you will be an acceptable offering to God. "And have peace with one another." Avoid contention and quarrelling, struggling for places, honours, and offices, and seek each other's welfare. For just as salt is sprinkled over every sacrifice for its purification, so must every soul be purged by fire, by the fire, if need be, of the severest and most terrible self-sacrifice. Let' this refining, purging, purifying fire of searching self-judgment and self-severity be ours. Let not this salt lose its savour, nor this fire its purifying power. "Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

Ignatius and the Sabbath.

"Be not deceived with heterodox opinions nor unprofitable fables. For if we still live according to Judaism, we confess that we have not received grace. For the Divine prophets lived according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this they were persecuted, being inspired by His grace to assure the, disobedient that there is one God, who manifested Himself by Jesus Christ, His Son, who is the eternal Word. If, then, they have cast off indeed their old principles and are come to the resurrection of a new hope in Christ, let them no longer observe the Jewish Sabbath, but live according to the resurrection of the Lord, in whose resurrection from the dead our resurrection also is ensured, by Him and by His death, which some deny."

From these words of Ignatius, written only about fifty years after Paul's day (Ignatius was a pupil of St. John) , we may see how incorrect is the statement of Seventh Day Adventists to the effect that it was the Roman Emperor Constantine who instituted the first day of the week instead of the seventh for the Christian Sabbath. Constantine was two hundred years later than the time of Ignatius. The writings of the Apostle Paul to the Colossians, Galatians. Romans and Hebrews are to the same effect. It is surprising how easy it is for men to blind their minds to facts if they become obsessed with any particular theory or fancy.

Our Father Knows.

Oh, Father, do you know when hearts are aching,
When summer days have fled and north winds blow,
Skies heavy, grey, and days so dark and lonely ?
“My child, I know.”

Oh, Father, do you care when hours are empty,
Empty of all that made this world so fair,
When blessings once so precious now have faded?
“My child. I care.”

Oh, Father, must we trust when ties are broken,
When loves of earth, once strong and deep have gone,
And strange, unwelcome things beset our pathways?
“Yes child, trust on.”

And, Father, are you near when storms are raging,
When life is draped in winter till we fear.
The fight will overwhelm and crush our spirits?
“My child, I’m near.”

Be of good cheer, let not your heart be troubled,
Nothing can touch your life unless I will,
I, who have shared life’s joy and sorrow,
Say, “Peace be still.”

Father, I will believe:
Oh, keep me faithful,
Through life’s long day till setting of the sun,
And may I hear when dawns eternal morning.,
“My child, well done.”

—Selected.

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