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Baptized into Christ's Death

It is always a joyful yet solemn occasion when we meet to witness the symbolizing of the consecration of any of our dear members in Christ in the waters of baptism.

Our Lord's words in Luke 9:23 *are* most impressive as we seek to understand what is implied by taking the symbol of water immersion. We read there, with our Lord speaking, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." We realize our Lord was not speaking of taking up the literal cross daily, as He Himself did not come to the literal cross until the last day of His earthly life. We think of our Lord's early life, wait-

ing until 30 years of age to present His perfect human life to His Heavenly Father. He presented His perfect humanity in sacrifice on the altar, His yielding up of life being pictured by His baptism in water, as we read in Matt. 3:13-17. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him." Our Lord would have yielded His life to the Father before He came to take this symbol of water immersion. "But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and, lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We see here the outward sign of a dove as a convincing indication to John the Baptist that this was the real Messiah, the Son of God. We remember that shortly afterwards, John saw the Lord walking, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" John was quite sure now that this One who had been immersed was the real Saviour of the world, the Son of God. '

John the Baptist had been baptizing for six months previous to our Lord coming to him. John's baptism pictured repentance of heart and remission of sins. The people of Israel he was calling to repentance were being prepared for the coming of the Messiah. It was not necessary for John the Baptist to understand why Jesus wished to be baptized *by* him. Verse 14 of Matt. 3, shows he was perplexed that Jesus, the perfect One, should come to him for immersion to picture remission of sins, and of course Jesus did not desire baptism for that purpose. Our Lord had no sins to put away in reality or by symbol. John was baptizing Israelites to repentance, and they did have sins to put away. When they put away their sins in their hearts, John gave them the symbol of water immersion to show they were coming back into harmony with the Law given to them by Moses. The Lord wished John to give Him the symbol, but it was not

necessary to explain the symbol of Christian baptism to John, because he was not invited to be a member of the Church class. But John did a wonderful service in preparing the Israelites to accept the Lord and become His followers. So Jesus at that time, at 30 years of age, had presented Himself to His Heavenly Father as a ransom sacrifice for the human *race* condemned in Adam. He wished to symbolize His death by immersion in water, and this is a lovely example that our Lord set for His followers. He is the One who has gone before, for all Christians to follow; He has led the way, and asks His followers to walk in His steps.

Our Lord's consecration is stated helpfully to us in the prophetic words of Psa. 40:6-8. It is wonderful how so many of these lovely Psalms are written in prophetic strain, picturing just what our Lord would do, and also what the followers of our Lord would do. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened; burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." This is speaking prophetically of the time our Lord came as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. The typical sacrifices and offerings for sins God did not desire any longer. The typical sacrifices had their place, but when the Lamb of God came to be sacrificed, all the typical sacrifices and burnt offerings were of no more value in the sight of God. This perfect One was going to pay the supreme sacrifice for humanity. That is why He is saying, prophetically, "Burnt offerings and sin offerings hast thou not required" any longer, because now the real sacrifice for humanity, Christ Himself, was the Redeemer to which the typical sacrifices were pointing forward. They were performed year after year to show the Israelites that the blood of bullocks and goats could never take away sin.

In Heb. 10:5 the Apostle quoting from Psa. 40, tells us a little extra. "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." A body had the Heavenly Father prepared our Lord. His was a perfect human body. It was required that He be a perfect human being so that He could pay the corresponding-price for our first parent, father Adam, who was also a perfect human being when he disobeyed and the sentence of death was passed upon him. So a body was prepared, a body just fitting to pay the sacrifice. An angel could not make the sacrifice, nor could a sinful person, but the perfect Son of God was the equivalent to offset the death of father Adam. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "He tasted death for every man."

Then Jesus invited His disciples to join Him in sacrifice. How beautifully He invites us to come to Him and follow His example, in Matt. 11:28-30. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." There we have an invitation from our Lord to those who feel their undone condition, who feel their need of a Saviour. They may rest in the assurance that the Saviour has paid the penalty once and for all. "Take my yoke upon you," to be yoked together with our Lord and Head, and walk with Him in the sacrificial life. Each individual member is yoked with the Master.

In this connection we instinctively turn to the words of the Apostle Paul in Rom. 6, where he tells us of the real death baptism into Christ—that death baptism that Christ entered into before He came to John to have it symbolized in the waters of the River Jordan. In verses 3-5 Paul states to the Romans, already consecrated followers, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" He is not saying they *were* baptized in water. He is speaking of the real death baptism. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." How beautifully and plainly this is expressed to us! Paul is speaking of the real death baptism, consecration to be dead with Christ, "if so *be* that we may live with him."

It is helpful to notice, also, the marginal note in many Bibles on Rom. 6:3 shows that the word “are” is better than “were,”—“Know ye not, that so many of us as **are** baptized into Jesus Christ **are** baptized into his death.” This is no momentary matter, but a continual thing; a day by day condition, as we see from other Scriptures also. It is not being baptized into any denomination for salvation; not baptized in water for salvation. It is not two baptisms, one into death and another in water. No, it is one death baptism, symbolized by water immersion. In Eph. 4:4, 5, *we* read—“There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” During this Gospel Age God is visiting the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name, a people who will delight to take His name and stand for it, and by His grace to die for it, faithful unto death. There is one death baptism—one baptism into death, pictured by immersion in water.

Again, the words of our Lord in Luke 12:50 are so full of meaning. These various texts help to impress and reveal the reality of death baptism, and once we have seen what a privilege and joy it is to yield our lives to Christ, to be with Him in His death, planted together in the likeness of His death, we see the beauty of the symbol that follows, because it is a picture of what has already taken place in the heart. Verse 50, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” This was quite a time after our Lord had taken the water baptism, yet He says, “I have a baptism to be baptized with.” His baptism was still going on. He was still laying down His life in death;

He was pouring out His soul unto death in His ministry. All that He did was a part of His sacrifice day by day for 3 } years. “And how am I straitened,” or pained. It was a severe sacrifice for the Lord, but was voluntarily given as we read in the Psalm, “I come to do Thy will, O God.” It was His mission in coming to earth to give His life a ransom for all humanity, who were condemned in Adam. “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.” This clearly shows the reality of death baptism, as our Lord was pouring out His soul unto death day by day in His sacrificial life. How helpful it would be for all who have taken up their cross daily to follow Christ, to repeat these words of our Lord each morning on rising!—“I have a baptism to be baptized with” —this day, and every day of my consecrated life *on* earth, for the Lord’s sake.

Turning to Matt. 20:20-23, we find a request by the mother of two of our Lord’s disciples, desiring a special favour of the Lord on behalf of her two sons. When Jesus asked her what she desired, she replied, “Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left in thy kingdom.” Jesus answered, “Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and *to* be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.” This is a lovely incident. We can see the desire of these two disciples, prompting their mother to ask this favour of the Lord; they desired to be very near to the Lord at all times, even into the Kingdom. The Lord did not rebuke them at all. He could see their heart desire to be near Him and serve Him, not only in the earthly way, but that they might be with Him in the Kingdom. When these disciples replied that they were able to be baptized with the Lord’s baptism, they undoubtedly did not know all the details or experiences through which they would be called upon to pass, but their hearts were right; they were willing to go through every experience necessary to be with their Lord. They considered it a privilege and a favour even to be invited. That is the outlook we should have on becoming disciples of the Master. We should not be fearful and say, Perhaps later. These disciples said, “We are able.” By the Lord’s grace, they would go on; they knew the Lord would be with them.

How glad we are when those who are drawn of God to Jesus respond to those endearing words of exhortation from the Apostle Paul given in Rom. 12:1,—“I beseech you therefore, brethren, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” “I beseech you therefore, brethren”—those who had become justified brethren, having accepted the Lord as

their Saviour, having peace with God. They are required to go further and make a full consecration, by presenting their bodies a living sacrifice. We ask, How can imperfect beings be holy and acceptable to God? It is only through the merit of Christ's righteousness, His robe covering their imperfections. God is looking at them through the perfection of Christ. They are accepted in the Beloved. When we keep this thought in mind, we are not discouraged, for God views us through the perfect merit of Christ Himself.

When we see the privilege of yielding our lives to God there is nothing more reasonable. The Apostle says, "By the mercies of God"—it is only because of God's mercy that anyone has ever been invited to walk in the steps of Christ so that they may reign with Him in His wonderful kingdom to come. "By the mercies of God" this is made possible. God passed over even the angels, that He might select from poor, imperfect humanity a Bride for Christ, so that His great power may be the more manifest in developing these vessels unto honour out of such poor material to begin with.

He is able to work in and through these weak vessels so that they may become strong in Him. Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." Paul's power was only in the spirit of God working in him to will and do God's good pleasure.

Dear friends, none of us can ever approximate the great mercy of God in inviting us to be dead with Christ, if so be that we may live with Him. What a beautiful picture we have of all those who have been baptized into Christ's death and proved overcomers, by His grace and strength, in Rev. 14:1, 4. John had seen a vision of these victorious overcomers. "And I looked and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his father's name written in their foreheads ... These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." These are the faithful Bride of Christ, pictured with Him. We rejoice also that God will have "after-fruits" in the wonderful Kingdom time, because these "firstfruits" will reign with Christ a thousand years to fulfil the wonderful promise that God made to Abraham, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

It is the great love of God revealed in the length and breadth and height and depth of His Plan that really appeals to our hearts. When we find that God's plan is not only for His Church, not only for taking out a people for the heavenly

kingdom, but a plan to provide salvation for every human being who has ever lived, how we do rejoice! But they will not all be invited to go to heaven. The majority of mankind will inhabit the earth, which will become like the Garden of Eden in the kingdom age to come.

From Rev. 20:4 we read about the class who overcome during this Gospel Age and then reign with their Master a thousand years. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them . . . I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." This is the victorious Church. They were not literally beheaded, but when they were baptized into Christ's death they accepted Christ as their Head, and His will as theirs. By His grace, they do not their own will, but the will of their great Head, *even* Christ. These are the ones who rejoicingly yield their lives day by day in response to the invitation, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." These are the ones who heed the Master's words, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." What a joyful experience it is to follow Christ in humility and meekness, knowing that this is His will for all those invited so to do.

So we rejoice in the privilege of reminding ourselves of the Master's love through His sacrifice, and His glorious invitation to those who are drawn to Him in this acceptable time. How beautiful is the symbol of water immersion, going down into the water symbolizing that which has already taken place in the heart.

Then rising up in newness of life, prompted and motivated by the indwelling of Christ in the heart. Just as *our* Lord took that lovely symbol, so do His followers delight to do the same, and by His grace find their joy in His service day by day, as they yield their lives to Him in every opportunity of service that they find in the Christian way.

From Psa. 112:12-15, we read,—”What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?” What can any of us render? It is only by the Lord’s grace we can yield our lives, poor and imperfect though they are; but when covered by the merit of Christ they are perfect and holy in God’s sight. God then looks at us through the perfection of Christ. That takes away all timidity; it also takes away all boasting, making us very humble, and determined to go on our Christian way in the grace and strength of the Lord.

“I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people.” The witness in water baptism is a lovely indication to others that our lives are united with Christ in God, and that we have taken His name upon us. We are able, by His grace, to walk each day in the Lord’s steps.

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” This has reference not to the final moment of death, but the daily dying. Our Lord had a baptism to be baptized with for 3+ years after He took the symbol of water baptism. Death baptism was going on each day of His ministry. Precious in the sight of Jehovah is the daily dying of His saints, because they are walking in the steps of Christ; they are His followers and by His grace are invited to walk with Him. They will joyfully serve with Christ in uplifting humanity in the kingdom time, to bring them back from the land of the enemy (death) that they may live as perfect human beings in Paradise restored, by obedience to the laws of Christ’s kingdom. “What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward us?”

Come, gracious Father, Sun divine!
On these baptismal **waters shine**.
Thy light, Thy love, Thy life impart,
And fill each consecrated heart.

We love Thy name, *we* love Thy laws,
And joyfully embrace Thy cause;
We’ll bear the cross, the shame, the pain,
With Thy dear Son, for us once slain!

We sink beneath the mystic wave,
Nor would we seek our life to save;
We yield our will to Thine own mould,
Nor would we seek our own to hold.

And as we rise for Thee to live,
O let Thy holy spirit give
The sealing unction from above,
The breath of life, the fire of love.

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A Message From Israel

The following interesting report on recent events in Israel was written early in July by one of the brethren living in Ashkelon, Israel. This was kindly sent to us by one of the brethren in U.S.A.

SO much has happened since last writing that you and the rest of the friends will probably be interested in hearing how things look from here. At the time it was not yet clear how Russia would be turned back; but already the turning back has been accomplished. Her agents (the Egyptian, Syrian, Jordanian and other Arab armies) were turned back in the military field by the Israel Defense Forces, and she and her associates were turned back politically this week in the United Nations.

We, ourselves, heard the turning back of the advance Egyptian commandos a quarter of a mile from our house and of the heavy armor 10 or 12 miles to the south. The bulk of the Israeli planes that decided the war in its opening hours flew over or close to our house. I am personally acquainted with many of the men who did the actual work of turning back; and the three of us did what we could in the civilian way, determined to stand our ground and help until the turning back was accomplished.

Now we can say that fulfilment of Ezek. 38:4 has started. Just when the remainder of the verse will be fulfilled the Lord knows, and His servants who are watching and praying will know as they see the events developing, bearing in mind such chapters as Joel 2, Habakkuk 1 and 2, and Zechariah 14. It is obvious to Israelis, great and small, that the next encounter will be with Russia directly. The Russians are hopping mad, and they have reason to be. They thought they had the whole Middle East in their hand, and suddenly they haven't. Israel spoiled their play by refusing to be wiped out. Now they control nothing between Damascus and the Suez Canal.

It is easy to understand why Russia was so anxious to stop the fighting as soon as it was obvious that Egypt and Syria were going to lose. Tremendous quantities of Russian armaments were destroyed in both Sinai and the Golan heights, and of the brand new tanks, trucks, guns, ammunition, and electronic equipment captured in both places the half was never told. Some of the installations captured in Sinai were evidently never intended to have any connection with the war against Israel but were part of the permanent occupation the Russians thought they had already achieved in the peninsula.

We listened to the emergency meeting of the Security Council over the Voice of America all day on Saturday (June 10) when Israel took over the Golan Heights, from which the Syrians had been shelling the northern settlements. It was interesting to follow how "Joshua" Goldberg was commanding the sun to stand still until the battle could be successfully completed. Or should we say that Goldberg fiddled while Federenko burned.

The Israeli expression that he who does not believe in miracles is not a realist has been borne out many times in recent events. The Old City of Jerusalem is quite generally accepted as a gift from the Almighty, the greatest miracle of the war. Israel would never have initiated any action against King Hussein; but, almost at the last minute, he flew to Cairo and placed his army under Egyptian command. The only logical explanation for this action is that to him it seemed inevitable that Israel would be annihilated. If he did not join with Egypt, he would have to face the wrath of mighty Russia by his own little self. He should not be condemned too severely for this mistake, because no less a personage than General De Gaulle is said to have prepared Israel's funeral oration. The prime minister of Lebanon evidently felt the same way; when the war started, he insistently ordered the defense minister to get into the fight, but the defense minister flatly refused to send his army to destruction. Having relinquished his command, King Hussein was at the mercy of the Egyptian commander of his own army. When the war started between

Israel and Egypt, the Jordanian Arab Legion started shelling Israeli Jerusalem. After several hours of shelling, the Israeli government sent a message to King Hussein suggesting that he stop shooting and both sides call the whole thing off. The answer was a sharp increase in the volume of the shelling, showing who was making the declarations. Still, it was not until the Arab Legion advanced into no-man's-land and took the U.N. headquarters that the Israelis started to move; and when they started there was no stopping them. They were headed for Ancient Jerusalem, the capital of Israel since the time of King David, where the Temple had stood. The Arab Legion fought bravely, but Hussain was helpless until his army was wiped out and the Egyptian commander had no one to fight for him. Only then could a cease fire be arranged; and by then the entire West Bank was in the hands of Israel, and Jerusalem had been re-united into one city. What God has joined together let not man put asunder. (This last remark is not just my own.)

In order to minimize fighting inside the Old City, Israel decided to go around to the east side and enter through the Lion's Gate, near the Dome of the Rock (Mosque of Omar), knowing that as soon as they got to that holy place the Arabs would stop shooting. There is only one place where a road crosses the Valley of Kidron, directly outside the Lion's Gate; so, even though the present wall was built during the Middle Ages, the gate and the street inside, Via Dolorosa, are evidently just where they were in Jesus' time. It was, then, along this street and out through this gate that Jesus carried His cross on the way to Calvary. The commander of the tank unit had been delayed by some business. Then he saw that his tanks were progressing rapidly toward their objective. Since in the Israeli army an officer always precedes his men, his driver had to hold the gas pedal of the half-track down on the floor board in order to pass up all the tanks and get to the head of the line before turning into the approach street to the Lion's Gate, driving through the gate and along the Via Dolorosa, then turning left to the Dome of the Rock, where the Arabs surrendered. At His first advent, Jesus came to die, not to establish His earthly kingdom, so His servants didn't fight. This time He has come to establish His Kingdom. Surely the King observes the same rule of leadership so strictly adhered to by His officers.

What shall we conclude, then? The Messiah, the King of the Jews, led His conquering army into the City of Jerusalem through the same gate and along the same street out which He had walked, carrying His cross, on the way to Calvary to die for the redemption of His people and of the whole world. (Isa. 31:1-5.)

On Wednesday, July 5, the six days' war was given its official name: The War of Redemption. Before the war the people were not terrified, but fearful. Confident of final victory, they could not be sure how much we would have to take before victory would come, and what would be the cost in precious lives. We had the opportunity of reassuring some that the Lord was watching over us, but we were not alone; many Israelis were saying the same thing. On the day war broke out, the next day, Tuesday, was declared a day of fasting and prayer. Personally, I was inclined to agree with Jonathan that the day of battle is a day to eat well, but I am sure that those who fasted had no physical way of participating in the effort, and I joined in the spirit of the day. The synagogues were full. While giving the fighting men and their leaders unstinting praise for their masterful performance, everyone here attributes the unbelievably quick victory to the Lord's over-ruling. It is noteworthy that Israelis show no interest whatsoever in the site of their army's victorious entry into Jerusalem, but they visit the Western Wall (Wailing Wall) in hundreds of thousands.

The nations have been taking counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed saying: Let us take the Holy City out of their hands. How can the people imagine that Israel would give up part of Jerusalem? This time, he that sitteth in the heavens has only been playing a game with them. The word translated "laugh" in Psalm 2:4 is also used for "play"; as to play basketball, marbles, or chess. But next time he will speak to them in His wrath, and they will find themselves being dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel and trampled in the winepress (Isa. 63:3). It is logical that "He that sitteth in the heavens" refers to Jesus, already in supreme control of the spiritual affairs of the world, much to Satan's dismay.

He has the best of credentials. The King of the universe has said to Him, “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee,” and has seated Him as King on His holy hill of Zion, perhaps literally as well as figuratively.

On Tuesday, July 4, the heads of all the various groups of residents of Bethlehem presented to Israel’s military governor in charge of that area a petition signed by more than a hundred leading men of the city, asking that Bethlehem be included in Israel. The City of David, little among the thousands of Judah, out of which came the ruler whose goings forth have been from of old, has become the first of all the cities of the world to ask to be made a city of Israel. In *due* time, city after city, and country after country will follow the example of Bethlehem, until the dominion of that “ruler in Israel” shall be from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth. (Micah 5:2; Psalm 72:8.) Since in Israel “proteksia” (knowing the right person) is of great importance, it is fitting that the King should reserve this great honor for the city in which He was born.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, lift up your voice and sing Hosanna in the highest, hosanna to your King.

Seeing The Advent

(Contributed Address.)

THE second advent of our Lord represents the culmination of His plan for the redemption of mankind. At His second advent it is with the world at large that He is going to deal chiefly. They will be the prime object of His second advent. The church will then be with Him in that work. Since this is so, it seems to be fairly important that we appreciate how the world views the advent. What do they think about it? Do they realise the advent?

Scriptures are contradictory on the surface. We have such texts as, “The world seeth me no more,” and then Rev. 1:

7, “Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.” Matt. 24:30 also indicates that the world is going to see the advent. It reads, “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

“Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven.” It is worth noting that there are two different signs in the New Testament; this one and one other. The other one occurs only once in the Bible, in Acts 28:11, “And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.” According to Professor Strong, “sign” there is a label—it carries the thought of a label, and since it is a ship, we would assume that the sign would label the ship. It would be a definite, clear-cut label.

The sign in Matthew 24 is used several times, but this sign is not a clear-cut label. Again quoting Professor Strong, he says that the sign here is “an indication,” and therefore verse 30 would read, “Then will appear the indication of the Son of man in heaven.”

Now, indications to some people mean a lot, and to other people they might not mean quite so much. First of all of course you have to see the indication, and secondly you must be able to interpret it. As an example of this, we note an every day occurrence,—the sunset. Some people can read the sunset. The sunset to them very often is an indication of the day to follow, whether it will be hot or cold, wet or dry. To others the sunset is simply the time to knock off. So a sign can be interpreted differently by different

people, and we want to consider how the people generally considered some of the signs at Jesus' first advent.

We are going to take two examples. The first is in Luke 7:19, respecting John the Baptist,—”And John, calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus saying, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another.” Reading on we find that the men went to Jesus and then in verse 21 it says, “And in that same hour he (Jesus) cured many of their infirmities and plagues and evil spirits, and unto many that were blind he gave sight.” Verse 22,—”Then Jesus answering said unto them (the disciples), Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard.” These things were a sign unto John. In verse 29 of the same chapter we see that they were also a sign to many others. Verses 29 and 30 read,—”And all the people that heard him and the publicans justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.” And so there we have a direct example of the two effects of this sign—unto some it was a sign that He was the Son of man, but others rejected it, not realizing the sign.

The other example is in Matt. 16:13-17,—”When Jesus came unto the coast of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.” These are the conclusions that they had drawn from the signs He had given them. Verse 15,—”He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?” Verse 16,—”And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” So we see again the difference between the interpretation of the sign.

Now we come to the point, back to the world again, How do they view the signs of the second advent? First of all, do they see the signs, and if they do see them how do they interpret them? We believe the world does see the signs. From practical experience, and from talking with people we would say that they do recognize that many things in the world today are really happening for the first time. But do they recognize what the meaning of these signs is? Do they appreciate the significance of these happenings? We believe not.

2 Pet. 3:3, 4 seems to lend weight to this line of thought. “Knowing this first that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?” The word “coming” there is “parousia,” which means presence, and so really this verse says—”Where is the promise of his presence?” This is what the scoffers are saying. The word “promise” is intriguing, and according to Professor Strong it has a slightly different meaning to what we normally attach to the word. According to Professor Strong it primarily has a meaning of “announcement,” and it is used especially when it has to do with a **Divine assurance**. If we give these words these meanings, this verse then reads, “Where is the announcement of his presence,” or where is the Divine assurance of His presence? This is what the scoffers are saying. This is why we believe that the world at the present moment does not realize the significance of the happenings in the world today.

We can then say, “Well why don't they recognize them? Why don't they recognize the meaning of these things?”

We return to our text in Matt. 16:16 where Simon Peter answered so firmly, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Verse 17 then says, “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Bajjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Therefore flesh and blood did not interpret the signs in those days. We feel that the same thing applies today. Flesh and blood do not interpret the signs. From Zeph.

3:8, 9, we read,—“Wait ye upon **me**, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey, for my determination is to gather the nations, to assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation ... For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.”

So after looking at these Scriptures, it is not surprising that the world at the present time does not really recognize the meaning of the happenings around them.

One further point also seems to add weight. In our text in Matt. 24:30,—“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven . . . and they shall see the Son of man coming,” according to Professor Strong the word “see” does not necessarily mean “see clearly”; it has a primary meaning of “to gaze at, as at something remarkable.” “And they shall gaze at the Son of man coming as at something remarkable.” The same word exactly occurs in Rev. 1:7,—“Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him,—every eye shall gaze at him as at something remarkable.” But the question is, are they going to recognize what they are seeing? It is a good contrast to then read Rev. 22:4. If we like to study Revelation, this chapter has to do with conditions on Earth after the Millennium, and it says in verse 4,—“And they shall see his face”—talking of God, and according to Professor Strong the word “see” here is not the same as “gaze at.” This word means that they shall **discern** clearly—horao—and they shall discern clearly His face. What a contrast to the way they are seeing Him now in the clouds of heaven—they are gazing at Him unaware of the events that are about to happen, similar to the time of His first advent.

Melbourne Christmas Convention

The brethren of the Melbourne Class extend a cordial invitation to all friends able to attend their Annual Convention to be held this year (D.V.) on December 23rd, 24th, 25th and 26th in the Masonic Hall, 254 Swan Street, Richmond. Further information from the Berean Bible Institute, 19 Ermington Place, Kew, Victoria, 3101.

A LAMP FOR THE FOOTPATH-

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.

(J. R. Miller)

THE WAY TO ACCEPT A FAVOUR

A young woman who was private secretary to the head of a college, when returning to her lodgings, slipped on the steps and sprained her ankle. She managed to reach her room, but was quite unable to go out and get something for her supper, and was delighted when the girl who had the room next to hers came in to see what she could do.

“Please let me go out and get you something to eat,” she begged.

“That is most kind of you,” said the secretary. “My purse is on the table.”

“No,” said her neighbour; “I want to get the things myself and come in and have supper with you here!”

“How delightful!” cried the secretary, “We will have a real party!”

So, instead of protesting, she let her friend give the “party.” She praised the food and thanked her for the jolly supper.

A few days later there was an afternoon tea at the college, to which the secretary invited her new friend. She explained why she came with a crutch, and told of the other girl’s kindness to her, and of the impromptu supper-party and how she had enjoyed it.

We should accept favours, not grudgingly, not awkwardly, but graciously and appreciatively; then watch for the first opportunity to bless the giver in return, with gratitude and love.

THE RADIO WITNESS.

The Frank and Ernest broadcasts heard over 3XY on Sunday evenings since January last were discontinued recently. Throughout the 35 sessions some good enquiries were received, though the response from this city radio station was not up to expectations. The expense was rather heavy at \$33.00 per session, but we trust that those interested will be further helped with the literature, as well as tuning in to 3GL Geelong on Sunday mornings at 10 o’clock wherever possible.

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 ministrations,
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 disenchanting.

--Beaumont & Fletcher.

TRACTS AVAILABLE

The article "Israel and the Holy Land in God's Plan" which appeared in the last issue of "Peoples Paper" is now available in tract form for general distribution. This article has been well received, and friends who can use these tracts to advantage are invited to obtain supplies for passing out where interest in the Bible message may be encouraged.

Tracts on other subjects are also available as follows: "Can the Living Talk with the Dead?" "When Christ is King", "Behold the Bridegroom", etc.

BIBLE STUDENTS MANUAL

Copies of these Manuals, otherwise known as Berean Comments, have been published recently by brethren in Chicago, and are now in stock for the benefit of our friends. With nice appearance, bound in strong cloth, with gold lettering, the price is 54.00, plus 15 cents postage.

Books Available

- "God's Promises Come True"—\$2.20.
- "The Divine Plan of the Ages," Cloth bound-80c; paper covers-55c.
- "Emphatic Diaglott," New Testament—\$2.20.
- "Daily Heavenly Manna," birthday pages—\$1.10.
- "Tabernacle Shadows"-68c.
- "The Book of Books,"
Reviewing the Bible as a whole—\$1.10.
- "Our Lord's Great Prophecy"-15c.
- "Manner of Christ's Return"-15c.
- "Christ's Return"-15c.
- "Some of the Parables"-15c.
- "Hope Beyond the Grave"-15c.
- "God and Reason"-15c.
- "Where Are the Dead?"-10c.