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The Manner of Christ's Return.

(Part 5. Continued from February Issue.)

SEEMINGLY CONFLICTING SCRIPTURES.

THERE are some statements of Scripture with reference to the manner of the Lord's return and appearing which, until critically examined, appear to be contradictory of each other. And no doubt they have for centuries served the divine purpose of concealing the truth until the due time for it to be understood; and even then, from all except the special class of consecrated ones for whom it was intended.

For instance, our Lord said, "Behold I come as a thief"; and, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man [the days of His presence] : They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage," "and knew not until the flood came." "And when Jesus was questioned of the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation" [marginal reading, "not with outward show"].— Rev. 16:15; Luke 17:26, 27, 20; Matt. 38, 39.

These scriptures plainly state and illustrate the manner of the Lord's coming. They show that He will be present unseen, doing a work of which the world for a time will be entirely unaware. His arrival must therefore be in a quiet manner, unobserved, and entirely unknown to the world, just "as a thief" would come, without noise or other demonstration to attract attention. As in the days of Noah the world went on with its affairs as usual, not in the least disconcerted, and without the slightest faith in the preaching of Noah with reference to the coming flood, so in the early part of the Day of the Lord, the world, having no faith in the announcement of His presence and of the impending trouble, will go on as usual, giving no heed whatever to any such preaching until, in the great flood of trouble, the old world—the old order of things—goes down, passes away, preparatory to the full establishment of the new order, the Kingdom of God under the whole heavens.—"As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it also be in the days [of the presence] of the Son of man."

On the other hand, we find scriptures which at first sight seem to be in direct conflict with these; as, for instance: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God."—"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty messengers, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"—"They [the world] shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."—"Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him."—1 Thes. 4:16; 2 Thes. 1:7, 8; Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7.

As seekers after truth, it will not do for us to say, in view of these passages, that the majority of them seem to favour whatever view we incline to prefer, and then to ignore the others. Until we have a view of the matter in which every Bible statement finds a reasonable representation, we should not feel sure that we have the truth on the subject. One statement of God is as true, and as firm a foundation for faith, as a hundred. And it would be wiser to seek for a harmonious understanding than to arrive at a conclusion or adopt a theory based on a one-sided interpretation, and thus to deceive ourselves and others.

Christians generally make no effort to harmonize these statements, and therefore their ideas are one-sided and incorrect. The last

group of statements is just as positive as the first, and apparently teaches the very reverse of a quiet, unobserved, thief-like manner in the Lord's coming and presence. In addition to these statements, we are referred to two other illustrations of the manner of His coming, viz.: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," and "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Acts 1:11. Matt. 24:27.) To reach a correct conclusion, these also must be given due weight.

In our examination of the subject we should note that while our Lord stated, as a positive fact, that His kingdom would be established without outward show, and that His coming, His presence, would be as a thief, requiring close, attentive watching to apprehend and discern it, all of the above texts generally cited as proof of an outward, visible manifestation are in highly figurative language, except the one which says that He will come in like manner as He went away. The symbolic must always bend in interpretation to the plainer, more literal statements, as soon as their symbolic character is recognized. Whenever a literal interpretation would do violence to reason, and also place the passage in direct antagonism to plain statements of Scripture, such passage should be considered figurative, and its interpretation as a symbol should be sought in harmony with obviously plain and literal passages, and with the general character and object of the revealed plan. By recognizing and thus interpreting the symbols in this case, the beautiful harmony of all the statements is manifest. Let us now examine them and see how perfectly they agree with the statements which are not symbolic.

(a) "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God." (1 Thes. 4:16.) The voice and the trumpet here mentioned correspond in every way with the same figures used in Rev. 11:15-19—"The seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. . . . And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged," etc. The same events are referred to in Daniel's prophecy:—"And at that time shall Michael [Christ] stand up [to assume control], the great Prince, . . . and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, . . . and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." And Paul adds to his mention of the voices and the trumpet the statement, "And the dead in Christ shall rise first." In 2 Tim. 4:1 he further states that Christ shall judge the quick (the living) and the dead, at this time of His appearing and kingdom; and the beginning of this judgment of the living nations is everywhere described as the greatest time of trouble the world has ever known.—Dan. 12:1.

Thus, Paul, John and Daniel evidently refer to the same time, the time of our Lord's appearing, and the establishment of His kingdom in the midst of a great time of trouble, and to the events preceding and introducing it. The same result is shown by each writer to follow the standing up of Michael, the voices and the trumpet: namely, trouble and wrath upon the nations and the resurrection of the dead. Next, mark the figure used:

"WITH A SHOUT."—The Greek word here translated "shout" is *keleusma*, which signifies a shout of encouragement. A shout implies a public message designed for the ears, not of a few, but of a mixed multitude. It is generally designed either to alarm and terrify or to assist and encourage. Or it may have the one effect upon one class, and the reverse effect upon another, according to circumstances and conditions.

The aspect of affairs in the world for at least fifty years very strikingly corresponds with this symbol, in the outbursts of world-wide encouragement for all men to wake up to a sense of their rights and privileges as men, and to consider their mutual relationships, the principles upon which they are based and the ends which they should accomplish. Where on the face of the earth is the civilized nation that has not heard the shout, and is not influenced by it! The entire civilized world has, for years past, been studying political economy, civil rights and social liberties as never before in the annals of history; and men are encouraging each other, and being encouraged, as never before, to probe these subjects to the very foundation. The shout of encouragement started by the increase of knowledge among men has already encircled the earth, and under its influence men are banding themselves together, encouraged and assisted by men of brain and genius, to contend and strive for both real and fancied rights and liberties; and as their organizations increase and multiply, the shout grows louder and longer, and will by and by result as foretold, in the great time of trouble and tumult of angry nations. This result is graphically described by the Prophet—"The noise of a multitude in the mountains [kingdoms] like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of battle."—Isa. 13:4.

"THE VOICE OF THE ARCHANGEL"—is another striking symbol of similar import. The name "archangel" signifies chief messenger; and our anointed Lord Himself is Jehovah's Chief Messenger—the "Messenger of the Covenant." (Mal. 3:1.) Daniel refers to the same personage, calling Him Michael, which name signifies who as God—an appropriate name for Him who is "the express image of the Father's person," and the representative of His authority and power. The voice of the Archangel represents Christ's authority and command. This symbol, then, represents Christ as taking control and issuing His commands, His official orders, announcing the change of dispensation by the enforcement of the laws of His kingdom.

The same thought is differently expressed by Daniel, when he says, Then shall Michael, the great Prince, "stand up." To stand up signifies to assume authority, to give commands. See "arise," Isa. 2:19, 21. Another illustration of this symbol is from David, who says of Christ prophetically, "He uttered his voice; the earth melted." The great time of trouble will be precipitated, and the earth (organized society) will melt, or disintegrate, under the change of administration going into effect when the new King utters

His voice of command. At His command, systems of error, civil, social and religious, must go down, however old or firmly entrenched and fortified they may be. The sword out of His mouth shall cause the havoc : The truth on every subject, and in all its varied aspects, shall judge men, and, under His power and overruling, shall cause the overturning of evil and error in all their thousand forms.

“THE TRUMP OF GOD.--Many seem thoughtlessly to entertain the idea that this trumpet will be a literal sound on the air. But this will be seen to be an unreasonable expectation, when it is noticed that Paul here refers to what the Revelator designates “The Seventh Trumpet,” the “Last Trump” in a series of symbolic trumpets. (Rev. 11:15 ; 1 Cor. 15:52.) The proof that these references are to the same trumpet is found in the record of the events connected with each. Paul mentions the resurrection, and the establishment of the Lord’s Kingdom, as connected with “the trump of God,” and the Revelator mentions the same with even greater minuteness. The propriety of calling the “seventh,” or “last trump” the “trump of God,” is evident, too, when we remember that the events mentioned under the preceding six trumpets of Revelation refer to humanity’s doings, while the seventh refers specially to the Lord’s work, and covers the “Day of the Lord.” Since the six preceding trumpets were symbols—and this is generally admitted by commentators and students who make any claim as expositors of Revelation—it would be a violation of reason and common sense to expect the seventh, the last of the series, to be a literal, audible sound on the air. And not only so, but it would be out of harmony with the Lord’s general methods, as well as with those statements of Scripture indicating the secrecy of His coming; for a thief never sounds a trumpet to announce his arrival.

The seven trumpets of Revelation are all symbolic, and represent seven great periods of time and their events.

We find ourselves to-day in the midst of the very events which mark the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The great voices, the increase of knowledge, the angry nations, etc., taken in connection with time-prophecies, establish this as a fact. Many events are yet to transpire before this seventh or last trumpet ceases to sound; as, for instance, the rewarding of the saints and prophets, the resurrection of all the dead, etc. In fact, it covers the entire period of the Millennial reign of Christ, as indicated by the events which are to transpire under it.—Rev. 10:7; 11 :15, 18.

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

Just here another fact should not be overlooked, namely, that the “Shout,” the “Voice of the Archangel,” and the “Trump of God,” as above explained, are all instrumentalities for the accomplishment of the harvest work of the Gospel Age. If, therefore, we see not only the meaning of these symbols, but the foretold results actually taking place, we have additional proof both that we have rightly interpreted the symbols, and that we are now in this period called the “harvest.” Many will need no aid in tracing a separating work now going on between the truly consecrated and the merely nominal Christians. Many can see the symbolic fire already under way, and can discern the “shout” of the people, the command of the new King Immanuel and the events called the “seventh trumpet,” and the “clouds” of trouble, in which the Lord comes and from and in which His power is to be manifested—subduing all things unto Himself.

The recognition of the harvest work in actual process is proof of the Lord’s presence, since He declared that He would be the chief reaper and director of the entire work, and that this would be His first work —“Behold a white cloud. and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. . . . And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth ; and the earth was reaped.”—“In the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, gather” etc. (Rev. 1 5:14, 16; Matt. 13:30.) The harvest work will be accomplished gradually, but all of its days are “days of the Son of Man”—days of our Lord’s presence and power— recognized in the end by all, but at first only by the class specified by the Apostle —“Ye, brethren—not in darkness.”

“IN FLAMING FIRE.”—The next of these symbolic statements can be readily understood, if the meaning of the symbols, fire, etc., be borne in mind. It is, “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”-2 Thes. 1:8.

Expressed literally, we understand this to signify that our Lord’s presence will be revealed or manifested to the world from His position of spiritual control (“heaven”), in the wrath and punishment then visited upon evil and evil-doers. It will be consuming wrath, as indicated by the symbol, fire, and will leave neither root nor branch of evil systems, error, oppression, or wilful sinners;

and all the proud, and all evil doers, shall be burned up as stubble in that judgment day. In its beginning—in this “harvest” period—this fire will burn very fiercely, consuming pride and evil, now of such rank growth. Happy those who will surrender their pride and evil to be destroyed, that they themselves be not destroyed also (in the “second death”), as some resisters will evidently be, during the Millennial age. It is of this time that we read, “Behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”—Mal. 4:1.

The “mighty angels,” messengers, or agents of His power, are various, and may properly be understood as applying to and including all the various agencies, animate and inanimate, which shall be used by our Lord in the overthrow of the evil systems of the present, and in the chastisement of evil-doers.

While the wrath or vengeance of the Lord is thus to be expressed in flaming fire, in consuming trouble, such as never before was known—so general and wide-spread, and so destructive of evil—righteousness and the righteous will begin to be favoured. And as these dealings become more and more apparent, men will begin to draw the inference that a new power has taken control of human affairs; and thus the presence of our Lord as King of kings shall be revealed to the world. “He shall be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance [both] on them that knew not God [who are not really acquainted with God, but who nevertheless fail to obey the light of conscience, which all to some extent possess] , and [also on those who, while knowing God, yet] obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Under the chastisements and increasing light and favourable opportunities of the Millennial day, all will be brought to such a clear knowledge of the truth and the way of righteousness as to be without the excuse of ignorance, or of inability to obey the truth; and those who persistently continue enemies of God and righteousness shall be punished with lasting destruction [a destruction from which there shall be no resurrection] from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

“IN POWER AND GREAT GLORY.”—The next statement is to the effect that the world will see the Son of man coming, before His kingdom is fully set up or His joint-heirs are all gathered and exalted with Him. And, seeing His coming, all the tribes of the earth will mourn—“They shall see the Son of man coming with power and great glory.”

Already the world sees the clouds of trouble gathering and darkening; they realize that a power is now at work in the affairs of men, with which they cannot cope; the near future, from the present outlook, is dark and ominous to all who have sufficient intelligence to mark the trend of events. Thinking men observe the persistency with which questions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, are forced upon their consideration, demanding an expression of their individual principles. Many recognize the glory and power of earth’s new Ruler, yet because clouds and darkness are round about Him they do not recognize the King Himself. Men see the clouds, and therefore see Him coming in the clouds with power and great glory [the glory of power and justice], but they do not recognize Him. Not until the clouds have let fall hail stones and coals of fire (Psa. 18:12, 13) to batter down men’s pride, and selfishness, and prejudices, and consume these, will the clouds disappear, and reveal the full majesty and glory of Christ’s presence.

If men would consider, and hearken to the voice of the Lord, which now directs the course of justice, and warns of impending retribution, the great disasters of the near future would be averted; but “God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet men perceiveth it not. . . Then he openeth the ears of men [in the thunder tones of “the day of trouble”] and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw men from his [own] purpose, and hide pride from man.”

“Behold, he cometh with clouds,” and in due time “every eye shall see [discern] him,” shall recognize His presence, power and authority; and all must submit to it whether willing or unwilling, until the loosing of Satan for a little season, in the close of the Millennium, when after full experience their willingness or unwillingness will be fully tested, and the unwilling will be destroyed--the second death, symbolically called the lake of fire.—Rev. 21:8.

Thus seen, all of these symbolic explanations of the manner of our Lord’s coming accord perfectly with the plain statements which declare that His presence will be a secret for a time, known only to those watching.

(To be continued.)

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Bible Study Meetings.

IN May issue of "Peoples Paper" last year a short article was printed on the subject of conducting Bible studies; the sentiments expressed at that time seem to have been appreciated and request has been made that it be published again. This is now being done with additional thoughts respecting prayers at the gatherings of the Lord's people.

The manner in which Bible studies are conducted in the various Classes is important for the welfare of members, and an observer is impressed with the fact that while the chairmen desire to promote the progress of all at the studies, one fault in evidence is too much speaking on the part of the leaders themselves.

It is an incorrect idea for class leaders to feel they are called upon to give a short speech after each member of a class has spoken on any particular subject; it tends to hinder rather than encourage members to express themselves when they are waiting for the chairman to cease before they are able to speak on a subject already before the class.

It matters not that the leader has the very best of thoughts; it is not helpful Bible study for the chairman to take up as much or more time than all the other members combined. Provided members keep to the subject or verses of Scripture under review there is no necessity for the chairman to add more than a word or two of thanks between each speaker (except when a wrong thought is expressed) until the summing up, which also should be as brief as possible. Members having had the opportunity of speaking freely on a subject should refrain from covering similar thoughts again after the chairman has summed up, and all can help greatly by keeping strictly to the particular matter before the class.

Most happy and blessed are those studies where the members come well prepared with their thoughts and related Scriptures, and are alert to which verses or questions are under review and express themselves briefly and to the point, the chairman asking for all thoughts on each subject or verse without entering the discussion himself, apart from directing the study, and then concluding the matter with a helpful summing up that gives a feeling of helpfulness and satisfaction to all present, under the guidance of the holy spirit.

The matter of prayer at the gatherings of the Lord's people is also a very important one, and it would seem that lengthy prayers, either in opening or closing a meeting, are not generally helpful. It may be that some brethren feel they are called upon at the opening prayer to present lengthy thanksgiving and petitions to the Lord, even though the closing prayer may be much shorter. However, experience proves that a prayer of a few minutes with well chosen words from the heart brings much more blessing upon the gathering than a prayer of up to ten or more minutes duration. It seems almost impossible to avoid repetition of expression in a lengthy prayer, and, as our Lord indicated, this is not helpful.

Again, at such times as public meetings the desire may be to convey some of the wonderful truths of the plan of God in prayer; in other words, a form of short chart talk may be presented in thankfulness to God; yet there is danger in this

of praying to the assembly, especially the newcomers, instead of praying to the Lord. There can be no doubt that "The Lord's Prayer" is a model of deep and reverential expression in few words which all the brethren may take as a guide to prayer on behalf of an assembly of the Lord's people before His throne of grace.

"Peoples Paper" Subscription 4/- per annum

Increasing costs of production, which now amount to 100% above those of years ago when the "Peoples Paper" subscription was 2/6 per year, leaves no alternative but to increase the price, which will now be 4/- per annum. Our friends will at once realise that even this advance will not meet the full increase, but it will assist to that end, and thus relieve the General Tract Fund of some of the deficiency to be made up in the production of "Peoples Paper." New subscriptions can assist, and our friends who can help in this way will be rendering good service, and it is hoped bring a blessing to those receiving the "Paper."

Adelaide Easter Convention.

The Adelaide friends wish to announce that their usual Convention will be held again this year (D.V.) over the Easter season, in Druid's Hall, Flinders Street, Adelaide. from Good Friday, 26th March, to Easter Monday, 29th March.

A hearty invitation is extended by the brethren in Adelaide to all friends able to attend the gatherings; further information also Convention programmes may be obtained from the secretary—Mrs. H. Bartel, 10 Winston Avenue, Clarence Gardens, Adelaide.

A small boy, when asked by an admiring spectator how it was that he had learnt to skate SO well, said: "Oh, I don't know; I think it must have been by getting up every time I fell down." SO it is, "A fast man falleth seven times, and riseth up again." (PROV. 24:16.)

Discontent is like an unlatched gate on a windy day; you won't get any peace until you stop it.

Fear Not, Little Flock.

(Luke 12:32. Convention Address.)

LET us think, first, of the effect fear has on the human mind. We read in Prov. 9:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." This text tells us to fear the Lord, and yet our text in Luke 12 tells us to "fear not." So we see there are two kinds of fear. The one mentioned in Proverbs is a reverential fear. Strong gives the meaning of the word as "revere."

There is another text mentioning "fear," in 1 John 4:18—"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." This is a slavish fear. The meaning of it is "alarm," and it is the same word as used in our text in Luke 12:32. The Diaglott puts it, "bath restraint" instead of "torment." It means that fear restrains progress of

Christian growth. John also tells us that perfect love will cast out this fear. Fear is one of mankind's greatest enemies, and is one way in which Satan endeavours to hinder the Little Flock from gaining a place in the Kingdom. Right down through the ages Satan has used fear as a means to control the human mind, and so separate us from God.

If many of God's prophets had given way to fear instead of having faith in God, they would not have been fit for the work allotted to them. We remember the prophet Job, how God permitted Satan to bring upon him a painful disease, and then he suffered great temporal losses. This experience would have caused many to become fearful and give up the ways of the Lord. Satan thought that eventually such disasters would cause righteous Job to turn away from the Lord, but the prophet's faith kept him from becoming fearful.

Right down the Gospel Age Satan has tried to prevent men from having a clear understanding of God's character and plan, or to turn away from God those who had accepted Jesus and had a measure of light respecting God's plan. During the dark ages Papacy taught that all who did not adhere to her teachings would be tortured in a hell of fire, while those of her faith who were not really good enough for heaven, would be required to suffer reformatory punishment in purgatory, which might be shortened and relieved by their relatives securing the prayers of the priests. This doctrine held its converts through fear. Many to-day, through ignorance, are still held by fear to continue believing this God-dishonouring doctrine, and so are prevented from obtaining a clear understanding of the character of the Creator.

We not only see Papacy holding together her subjects by fear; later on, when the iron bands of Papacy had been broken, Protestantism, while rejecting the theory of purgatory, still held to the worse idea of eternal torture for all not fit for heaven. Many Protestant denominations still teach this doctrine of eternal torture, and many are bound by fear of what will happen if they do not hold to the teachings of their particular denomination. So we find that many people are serving God, not from a desire to be co-labourers with God in His work, but because of fear.

While looking into this matter of "fear," a little passage was found which was claimed to have been spoken by some ministers of religion, and they said that if they believed there was not eternal torture, they would do all the wicked things imaginable. This shows that they were not impelled by the holy spirit, but by the spirit of fear, the spirit with which Satan controls his subjects. It reminds us of that passage in 2 Tim. 1:7, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

We know, too, that heathen nations believe all kinds of devilish doctrines which produce fear in these people. They are afraid of God because they do not understand His real character, being restrained by Satan's influence.

During the dark ages severe persecutions came upon Christians who did not accept the teachings of Papacy. In Rev. 13:7 there is a reference to a "beast," a symbol of Papacy, and it says, "It was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." And in Dan.

7:25 there is a similar picture—"And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most

High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.” During this period every means was used that could be thought of to crush out the free spirit of true Christianity. History tells us of the terrible persecutions of this time, and it is almost beyond us to-day to realize how a church, claiming to be the representative of Christ, could use such dreadful means of persecution to force others to believe as they did. But both history and the Scriptures confirm this fact, and it continued. We believe, for over a thousand years. It was Satan’s method to put down all opposition to his false teachings by upsetting the faith of all but the true followers of Christ. It was fear that Satan used to try to stamp out true Christians by his war with the saints.

It must have been a great comfort to the few who did not lose faith in God in those times to call to mind such texts as ours, “Fear not, little flock, it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” It is a great comfort to all Christians, then, to have faith in God as their great Protector. We are reminded of the passage in Heb. 13:6, “The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

It is possible to trace through the pages of history and find that there was always a “little flock,” a small number indeed, who feared not what man would do to them, and who forsook the ways of the world. Although persecuted and tormented, they did not lose faith in God. Fear did not control their lives, for they knew of the great promises made to true followers of Christ.

Coming down to our day and especially the Harvest of the Gospel Age. we may enquire, how does Satan treat the followers of Christ now? Does he through fear cause those of the Little Flock to lose faith in God and the Lord Jesus Christ? It is interesting to read the passage in Psa. 46:1-3, which refers specially to Christians. -God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” Those who understand God’s plan with respect to His dealings with mankind need not fear. But this passage also infers that some will fear at this time. It definitely has reference to the end of the Gospel Age. And what do we find in the world to-day? Nominal Christendom, and especially the leaders of the various denominations, have a dread of the future. The trouble which is enveloping the world to-day, and has been for the past years, is all part of the preparation work for the next Age, but little do mankind in general realise the method God is using to prepare men’s hearts for the coming Age. Those who have no faith in God try to drown their fear in worldly pleasures. Satan has succeeded in capturing the minds of the great majority of mankind, and has turned them away from God to worldly pleasures. The text in Psalm 46 says “We will not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea.” So even though the present order of society becomes disintegrated and overthrown by the restless masses of mankind, and the governments are overcome in anarchy, we have the promise in verse 5, “God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early.” “Fear not, little flock; for it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” We have that reassuring message, even at this time.

We remember, too, the words of the Apostle Peter. He was speaking of the same time in his second epistle, ch. 3:11-14, where he says, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved. what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” So the peace which the Christian possesses is just the opposite of fear, isn’t it?

We have also our Lord’s words to His disciples on the Sea of Galilee. They are recorded in Matt. 8:23-26. “And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves; but he was asleep. Then his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us; we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith, Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.- That seems to illustrate how the Christian can be overwhelmed with fear, but at the same time what a comfort it is to us all, whether it be the great storm that will soon fill the whole world (carrying the mountains into the midst of the sea, as we read in Psalms, the whole present social structure being done away with) , or whether it be the storms of life that will come upon all of us sooner or later, we can remember the Lord’s words, “Why are ye fearful?” Jesus has the power to still the storms of trouble, if we have the faith.

In Luke 12 our Lord is telling us of various things that may prevent the Christian from entering into the Kingdom of God. He explained that if anyone desires to have a place in the Kingdom with Him, he must seek that Kingdom and not earthly goods. - But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all those things shall be added unto you.” The Lord did not promise His followers an abundance of earthly riches, ease or luxury. One of the company said to Him, “Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.” This one evidently wanted the Lord to intervene in his private affairs so that he could gain some earthly treasures. But Jesus warned him of being covetous. “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” Then He gave a parable to illustrate that an abundance of earthly things would not assist one to a place in the Kingdom. From v. 16 we read, “And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, this will I do; I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto

him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." This parable shows us how one can put all his time into grasping after temporal things and neglecting the spiritual things.

Then Jesus goes on to speak of the birds. They did not hoard up food and so on, but are provided for by our Heavenly Father. Are we not better than the birds? The thought seems to be that one could become so anxious about earthly riches etc. that he would be drawn away completely from God. The words "taking no thought" in v. 22, mean "anxious thought," and it seems that one can become so engrossed with earthly treasures, and so interested in his temporal well-being, that he would lose faith in God and become disunited with Him, and lose his position in the Kingdom. Hence our Lord's words, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." At the head of our Convention programme there is a text from Psa 27:1, reading "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" We can understand how necessary it is to have faith in God. If we have that we will not be turned away from Him through fear.

There is also a reassuring passage in Prov. 29:25, "The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." There are so many ways in which Satan endeavours to turn Christians away from the Kingdom that we need to have that faith that will keep us from becoming fearful and be led away.

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"News Items.

Eisenhower sees Danger of War.

In his final report as chief of the U.S. General Staff, General Eisenhower declares that America would be on the brink of war if the Mediterranean were closed by Soviet infiltration.

"If this oldest corridor between the east and the west were walled up," he said, "the effects would be instant and catastrophic.

"Conditions to-day are sufficiently turbulent, that war might be visited upon the world without the impetus of planning or deliberate policy. One isolated action might precipitate a conflict."—The Melbourne "Age" Correspondent in Washington, 17/2/48.

Girls as "Men" for Next War.

London.—The Army and Air Force (Women's Service) Bill directs that words such as "men" and "soldiers" shall mean people of either sex.—Melbourne "Herald" Special Service, 3/2/48.

Passover Memorial, 1948.

The Jewish date for the anniversary of the institution of the Lord's Supper falls this year four weeks after Easter —on the evening of Thursday, 22nd April, after sundown. This will therefore be the appropriate time to keep the Memorial of Christ's death by the Lord's people generally.

Friends desiring the unleavened bread and wine will be gladly supplied from this office; early application should be made for same.

Memorial Services.

The following services have been arranged (D.V.) to take place in remembrance of Christ our Passover Lamb, and this early reference is made for the convenience of any visiting members. • Further services will be mentioned in April "Peoples Paper."

Melbourne.—Thursday evening, 22nd April, at 8 p.m., at Berean Bible Institute, 19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4, Melbourne. (For information, write, or phone Hawthorn 6251.)

Sydney.—Thursday, 22nd April, at 7 p.m., at Child Study Building, 75 Liverpool Street (near George Street).

Finding and Losing.

To find my life in the sense in which the Master uses the expression, means to place myself first, and thus be carnally minded. It conveys the idea of loving and living for this present world, so that at the end of the course I shall find myself defeated rather than victorious; and finally fall short of that full reward which would otherwise have been mine. Therefore to find my life is to lose it.

In contradistinction to this, to lose my life for Christ's sake means to place Him first, and thus be spiritually-minded.

It conveys the idea of living for eternity, so that at the end of the journey I shall prove victorious.

—Selected.

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