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The Kingdom of God.

ANY who have not carefully examined this subject, with concordance and Bible in hand, will be surprised, on doing so, to find its prominence in the Scriptures.

Our Lord Jesus in His talks with His followers strengthened and encouraged their expectations of a coming kingdom, saying to them, “I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father bath appointed unto Me, that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging [ruling] the twelve tribes of Israel.”, (Luke 22:29,

30.) And, again, “Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32.)

And when, instead of being crowned and enthroned, their recognized king was crucified, His disciples were sorely disappointed. As two of them expressed it to the supposed stranger on their way to Emmaus after His resurrection, they had “trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel”—delivering them from the Roman yoke, and making of Israel the Kingdom of God in power and glory. But they were sadly disappointed by the changes of the few days previous. Then Jesus opened their understanding by showing them from the Scriptures that His sacrifice was needful first of all before the kingdom could be established.—Luke 24:21, 25-27.

God could have given to Jesus the dominion of earth without redeeming man; for “The Most High ruleth over the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He pleaseth.” (Dan. 4:32.) But God had a grander design than could have been accomplished by such a plan. Such a kingdom could have brought blessings which, however good, could have been of only a temporary character, since all of mankind were under condemnation to death. To make the blessings of His kingdom everlasting and complete, the race had first to be ransomed from death and thus legally released from the condemnation which passed upon all in Adam.

That in explaining the prophecies Jesus revived the disciples’ hope of a coming kingdom is evident from the fact that afterward, as He was leaving them, they inquired, “Lord. wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” His answer, though not explicit, did not contradict their hopes. He said, “It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father bath put in His own power.”—Acts 1:6, 7.

True, the disciples at first, in common with the entire Jewish nation, had an imperfect conception of the Kingdom of God in supposing it to be exclusively an earthly kingdom, even as many to-day err in an opposite direction in supposing it to be exclusively a heavenly kingdom. And many of the parables and dark sayings of our Lord Jesus were intended in due time to correct these misconceptions. But He always held forth the idea of a kingdom, a government, to be established in the earth and to rule among men. And He not only inspired in them a hope for a share in the kingdom, but He also taught them to pray for its establishment—”Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done ON EARTH as it is in heaven.”

To the worldly-wise among the Jews, our Lord seemed an imposter and fanatic; and they considered His disciples mere dupes. His wisdom and tact, and His miracles, they could not well gainsay, nor reasonably account for; yet, from their standpoint of unbelief, His claim that He was the heir of the world, and would establish the promised kingdom which should rule the world, and that His followers, all of them from the humbler walks of life, would be joint- rulers with Him in that kingdom, seemed too absurd for consideration. Rome, with its disciplined warriors, its able generals and immense wealth, was the master of the world, and was daily growing more powerful. Who, then, was this Nazarene? and who were these fishermen, without money or influence, and with but a meagre following among the common people? Who were these that they should talk about establishing the kingdom long promised to be the grandest and mightiest earth had ever known?

The Pharisees, hoping to expose the supposed weakness of our Lord’s claims, and thereby to undeceive His followers, demanded of Him—When will this kingdom which you preach begin to make its appearance? when will your soldiers arrive? when will this Kingdom of God appear? (Luke 17:20-30.) Our Lord’s answer would have given them a new thought had they not been prejudiced against Him and blinded by their own supposed wisdom.

He answered that His kingdom would never appear in the manner in which they expected it. The kingdom which He preached, and in which He invited His followers to joint-heirship, was an invisible kingdom, and they must not expect to see it. “He answered them, and said, The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation [outward manifestation]; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for the Kingdom of God is [to be] in your midst.” In a word, He showed that when His kingdom should come,

it would be everywhere present and everywhere powerful, yet nowhere visible. Thus He gave them an idea of the spiritual kingdom which He preached; but they were unprepared and received it not. There was a measure of truth in the Jewish expectation concerning the ‘promised kingdom, which will in due time be realized, as will be shown; but our Lord’s reference here is to that spiritual phase of the kingdom, which will be invisible. And as this phase of the kingdom will be first set up, its presence will be unseen, and for a time unrecognized. The privilege of heirship in this spiritual phase of the Kingdom of God was the only offer then being made, and has been the one hope of our high calling during the entire Gospel age, which then began. Hence Jesus referred to it exclusively. (Luke 16:16.) This will be more clearly seen as we proceed.

When the parables of our Lord are carefully examined, it will be found that they clearly teach that the coming or setting up of the Kingdom of God in power is future; and, as a matter of course, not until the King comes. Thus the parable of the young nobleman going into a far country to receive a kingdom and to return, etc. (Luke 19. 11-15), clearly locates the establishment of the Kingdom at the return of Christ. And the message sent by the Lord to the Church long years afterward was, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10.)

From this it is evident that the kings who will reign with Him will not be crowned nor reign as kings in this life.

The Church at present, therefore, is not the Kingdom of God set up in power and glory, but in its incipient, embryo condition. And so, indeed, all the expressions of the New Testament with reference to it teach. The kingdom of heaven nowsuffers violence at the hands of the world; the King was maltreated and crucified; and whosoever will follow in His footsteps shall suffer persecution and violence in some form. This, it will be observed, is true only of the real Church, and not of the nominal one. But the promise is held out that if now we (the Church, the embryo kingdom) suffer with Christ, we also, in due time, when He takes to Himself His great power and reigns, shall be glorified and shall reign with Him.

With the early Church, the promises of kingdom honour and joint-heirship with the Master were strong incentives to faithfulness under present trials and persecutions, which they had been forewarned to expect; and in all the words of comfort and encouragement in the Apocalypse, given to the seven churches, none shine out more clearly and forcibly than those which declare, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne”; and, “To him that overcometh will I give power over the nations.”

These are promises which could not reasonably be misconstrued to apply to a present work of grace in the heart, nor yet to reign over the nations in the present life; since they who would overcome must do so by death in the service, and thus gain the kingdom honours.—Rev. 20:6.

Two PHASES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

While it is true, as stated by our Lord, that the Kingdom of God cometh not—does not make its first appearance— with outward show, in due time it is to be made manifest to all by outward, visible and unmistakable signs. When fully set up, the Kingdom of God will be of two parts, a spiritual or heavenly phase and an earthly or human phase. The spiritual will always be invisible to men, as those composing it will be of the divine, spiritual nature, which no man bath seen or can see (1 Tim. 6:16; John 1:18); yet its presence and power will be mightily manifested, chiefly through its human representatives, who will constitute the earthly phase of the Kingdom of God.

Those who will constitute the spiritual phase of the kingdom are the overcoming saints of the Gospel age—the Christ, head and body—glorified. Their resurrection and exaltation to power precedes that of all others, because through this class all others are to be blessed (Heb. 11:39, 40.) Theirs is the first resurrection. (Rev. 20:5.) The great work before this glorious anointed company —the Christ—necessitates their exaltation to the divine nature: no other than divine power could accomplish it. Theirs is a work pertaining not only to this world, but to all things in heaven and in earth—among spiritual as well as among human beings.—Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:20; Eph. 1:10; Phil. 2:10; 1 Cor. 6:3.

The work of the earthly phase of the Kingdom of God will be confined to this world and to humanity. And those (the Ancient Worthies) so highly honoured as to have a share in it will be the most exalted and honoured of God among men. As the spiritual nature is necessary to the accomplishment of the work of Christ, so perfect human nature is appropriate for the future accomplishment of the work to be done among men. These will minister among and be seen of men, while the glory of their perfection will be a constant example and an incentive to other men to strive to attain the same perfection. And that these Ancient Worthies will be in the human phase of the kingdom and seen of mankind is fully attested by Jesus’ words to the unbelieving Jews who were rejecting Him. He said, “Ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God.” It should be noticed also, that the Master does not mention that He or the apostles will be visible with Abraham. As a matter of fact, men will see and mingle with the earthly phase of the kingdom, but not with the spiritual; and some will, no doubt, be sorely vexed to find that they rejected so great an honour.

As Jerusalem was the seat of empire under the typical Kingdom of God, it will again occupy the same position, and be “the city of the Great King.” (Psa.48:2; Matt. 5:35.) A city is a symbol of a kingdom or dominion and so God’s Kingdom is symbolized by the New Jerusalem, the new dominion coming from heaven to earth. At first it will consist of only the spiritual class, the Bride of Christ, which, as seen by John, will gradually come down to earth;

that is, it will gradually come into power as the present empires break in pieces, during the Day of the Lord. In due time, however, the earthly phase of this city or government will be established, parts or members of which will be the Ancient Worthies. There will not be two cities (governments), but one city, one heavenly government, the one for which Abraham looked, “a city which hath foundations” —a government established in righteousness, being founded upon the sure rock foundation of the righteousness of Christ the Redeemer, the value of man’s ransom which He gave, and the firmness of divine justice, which can no more condemn the redeemed than it could previously excuse the guilty. —Rom. 8:31-34; 1 Cor. 3:11.

Glorious City of Peace! whose walls signify salvation, protection and blessing to all who enter it, whose foundations laid in justice can never be moved, and whose builder and designer is God! It is in the light which will shine from this glorious city (kingdom) of God that the nations (people) will walk on the highway of holiness, up to perfection and to full harmony with

God.—Rev. 21:24.

THE IRON RULE.

Many erroneously suppose that when Christ's Millennial Kingdom is inaugurated every one will be pleased with its ruling. But not so. Its regulations will be far more exacting than those of any previous government, and the liberties of the people will be restricted to a degree that will be galling indeed to many now clamouring for an increase of liberty. Liberty to deceive, to misrepresent, to overreach and to defraud others, will be entirely cut off. Liberty to abuse themselves or others in food or in drink, or in any way to corrupt good manners, will be totally denied to all. Liberty or license to do wrong of any sort will not be granted to any. The only liberty that will be granted to any will be the true and glorious liberty of the sons of God—liberty to do good to themselves and others in any and every way; but nothing will be allowed to injure or destroy in all that Holy Kingdom. (Isa. 11:9; Rom. 8:21.) That rule will consequently be felt 'by many to be a severe one, breaking up all their former habits and customs, as well as breaking up present institutions founded upon these false habits and false ideas of liberty. Because of its firmness and vigour, it is symbolically called an iron rule—"He shall rule them with a rod of iron." (Compare Rev. 2:26, 27; Psa. 2:8-12.) Thus will be fulfilled the statement, "Judgment will I lay to the line and righteousness to the plummet. And the hail [righteous judgment] shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters [truth] shall overflow the hiding place," and, every hidden thing shall be revealed.--Isa. 28:17; Matt. 10:26.

Many will feel rebellious against that perfect and equitable rule because accustomed in the past, under the rule of the present prince, to lord it over their fellow mortals, and to live wholly at the expense of others without rendering compensating service. And many and severe will be the stripes which a present life of self-indulgence and gratification will naturally demand and receive under that reign, before such will learn the lessons of that kingdom — equity, justice, righteousness. (Psa. 89:32; Luke 12:47, 48.) The lesson on this subject comes first to the living generation, and is near at hand.—James 5.

But, blessed thought! when the Prince of Life has put in force the laws of righteousness and equity with an iron rule, the masses of mankind will learn that "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."

They will learn that God's plan and laws are best in the end for all concerned, and ultimately they will learn to love righteousness and hate iniquity. (Psa. 45:7; Heb. 1:9.) All who under that reign have not learned to love the right will be counted unworthy of lasting life and will be cut off from among the people.—Acts 3:23; Rev. 20:9; Psa. 11:5-7.

PEOPLES PAPER AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

Berean Bible Institute General Report.

ANOTHER year's work of the Berean Bible Institute was terminated at the end of April and we are happy again to express gratitude and thanksgiving to our heavenly Father for the many blessings and favours bestowed in connection with the efforts to serve His cause of truth in these last days of the harvest time.

It is fitting also to place on record once again the generous and loving assistance of many of our brethren, whereby, under the Lord's providence, the work over the past year has continued steadily with considerable evidence of success.

Our readers will realise, however, that no "great works" are claimed nor sought after; we are still living in the day of small things when the important work is the encouragement of our brethren in Christ, and the finding of other sincere people whose hearts and minds respond to the fuller and more satisfying truths of God's Word, enabling them to be freed from the creeds of denominational bondage, in harmony with our Lord's exhortation to all who have ears to hear—"Come out of her (Babylon) My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." (Rev. 18:4 etc.) The witness thus given to find the last members of "My people," being heard by a considerable multitude will also bear fruit in the next age, the Kingdom age, "in the day of visitation" for all mankind. (1 Pet. 2:12.)

Our monthly "Peoples Paper and Herald of Christ's Kingdom," now in its 30th year of publication, is distributed to a number of countries throughout the world, as well as to all the Australian states, and from reports received its message is much appreciated. To all contributors to the columns of "Peoples Paper" appreciation is expressed for the help thus rendered in the service of the Lord. Some of our friends forward subscriptions for others and this is of good assistance; however, subscriptions to the "Paper" are not sufficient to cover its full cost, so the deficiency is made up from the General Fund. Considerable quantities of the journal are distributed free to all who give evidence of desiring spiritual things, and our readers are welcome to submit names and addresses of all whom they feel may be assisted by copies of this publication and other free literature.

Quantities of free tracts have been distributed by willing workers, including supplies of the radio dialogues, and all our friends are invited to procure this free literature for witnessing at all opportunities. Kingdom cards are also in use again and over the years have proved a good means of creating interest for literature. Supplies are available to all who are willing to assist in witnessing to the truth.

The work of forwarding the Consolation Cards to bereaved persons has been continued in some areas and it is truly a means of comfort and consolation to many in their time of special sorrow. These cards are supplied free, together with full information about this service, to any of our friends who will undertake this work in their own localities.

Proclaiming the message of the Kingdom at public meetings has not been neglected over the past year and these gatherings are productive of encouragement to all in attendance as well as enlightening and instructive to new friends. The glad tidings of the Kingdom are too good to be kept and should be proclaimed publicly, as well as privately, by each group of the Lord's people whenever appropriate, in harmony with the spirit and guidance of the Lord.

Books and booklets have been supplied to the order of many of our friends over the year past. The new edition of "Plan of God

in Brief' is being used to good advantage. We are sorry, however, that publishing costs for the proposed new edition of "Foregleams of the Golden Age" are such as to prohibit this work at the present time. However, copies of this valuable book are still available to all able to place them to advantage. Opportunity is taken at this time to express appreciation to all friends who offered to assist with the proposed new edition of "Foregleams of the Golden Age", and should conditions prove more' favourable at a later date, this work may then be undertaken. Any of our friends able to devote some time to the distribution of books and booklets are advised to apply for full information about this service.

The financial side of the year's work in general is shown by the General Tract Fund below. The voluntary donations no doubt represent much sacrifice on the part of the dear brethren as a whole, rendered as to the Lord.. The expenses are also met in the service of Christ and are such as it is felt would have His approval. It will be observed that some good assistance has been transferred to the General Fund from the Reserve Fund to cover all activities, and leaving a small balance of £2/15/6 in credit towards the year ahead.

From the Reserve Fund account it will be seen also that considerable help has been transferred to the Radio Fund, thus enabling more to be done in the witness over the air, reference to which will be found in this issue of "Peoples Paper." The use of the full amount at the credit of the Reserve Fund was undertaken with a view to faithful use of this means in the service of the Lord while the opportunities were still with us. By His providence this assistance was made available for use in His service, and with prayer for His guidance its use has been blessed over the year past.

Entering upon another year of service for the truth cause, it does all God's people good to meditate upon the privileges of being granted a part in this the highest and most esteemed service offered to any one in the world. And think of it, this service is available to every one who has named the name of Christ; to neglect a part in the service of Him who has done so much for us, manifests a lack of appreciation of His sacrifice on our behalf. The time is short, how short we may not know; some of our dear brethren have passed beyond the vail in the year past. It may be as the poet expresses it—'Another year, or more, or less, and we have crossed the wilderness." World conditions certainly show that the harvest of the Gospel Age draws to a close; yet it is still harvest time, "And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." (John 4:36.)

The prayers of all dear friends for God's blessing and guidance upon the work generally are sought at this time again, that all may be done to His praise and glory, in the service of His people.

The Radio Work,

THE opportunity of sounding forth the glad news of the Gospel of Christ over various radio stations has been with us now for nearly 4'A years, and this is cause for further thankfulness to the Lord. The assistance of our brethren in voluntarily providing the means to enable this work to continue is no doubt well pleasing to God, and also most encouraging. The help given by our brethren in U.S.A. towards the radio efforts in this country is also greatly appreciated again at this time.

Looking back upon this effort over the air to reach those people who have ears to hear the truth message, the response can be said to be very encouraging. From the great number of enquiries received some have been brought to a full knowledge and appreciation of the truth, and this is cause for rejoicing indeed. Fresh cases of interest are continually being found and the Lord, who knows all hearts will no doubt bless the message to all in right heart condition at this time. Then, of course, there are benefits which will be manifest only in the age to come and of which no estimate can be formed at present.

Changes in radio stations have been necessary throughout the year past, but at present 3GL Geelong, Victoria, and 2KY Sydney are reaching a large circle of appreciative listeners, while cur friends in Perth continue steadily with the same witness over 6KY Perth.

The offering of printed copies of all Dialogues broadcast over the air has been well worth while, and many friends receive the weekly copies with their "Peoples Paper." While this service entails an amount of additional work it will be continued as long as possible.

Considerable quantities of radio advertising cards have been distributed throughout the year and this work is urged upon all who can distribute within hearing of a station and have a talent of time for use in this way. The cards are supplied free from the Radio Fund, and as they contain a little witness to the truth, as well as advertising the broadcasts, the work with these serves a double purpose.

The financial position in connection with the radio witness is shown by the Radio Fund and the voluntary contributions over the past year once again manifest the loving desire of many dear friends to assist is this form of witness in the service of the Lord. With the additional help from the Reserve Fund all expenses have been met and a credit of 15/13/1 is carried forward in this fund for the new term. The prayers of our brethren are desired for the Lord's guidance and blessing in connection with this service in the interest of His cause.

Illness of the World.

Millions of Men Under Arms.

Under the above headings the following appeared in the Melbourne press of May 13th last:—

New York, May 11 (A.A.P.).—Almost 19,000,000 men are under arms throughout the world, and about 40 nations are spending at least 27,400,000,000 dollars (approximately £ A9,000,000,000) a year on armaments, according to a "New York Times" survey, based on data gathered by its military editor (Mr. Hanson Baldwin) and correspondents in many other countries.

The survey indicates nations are spending perhaps 10,000,000,000 dollars (approximately £A3,000,000,000) snore on armaments than they did in 1938.

Probably more men are in uniform to-day than in the pre-war years despite the disappearance of Germany and Japan as military powers.

"The picture the survey reflects is drab. It shows nations, many of them wrecked by war and struggling under major economic burdens, attempting to maintain large military forces. Even small nations bowed beneath crushing taxation are allocating major parts of their budgets to military expenditures, although the forces thus created could do little against the strength of a major power.

"China, engaged in a bitter civil war,, has more men in her armies—between 4,000,000 and 5,000,000 Nationalists and 1,000,000 to 1,500,000 Communists—than any other nation. China is also spending the greater part of her inflation-swollen budget for armaments; more than any other nation—probably over 80 per cent.

Largest Army.

"Exclusive of the amorphous half-armed masses divided into the warring armies in China, the Russian armed forces are the largest in the world. The Russian army is probably in numbers 3,500,000 to 4,100,000 strong. She probably has about 200 divisions organised or partly organised, and numbers in her reserve classes between 7,000,000 and 12,000,000."

The biggest spender on armed forces is the United States, which in dollar value at unofficial exchange rates (an unreliable index) will spend 34 per cent. of her projected 1948 budget on military items.

The "New York Times" admits that because of the carry-over of war-time secrecy into the post-war era and other causes there are big gaps in the survey, but despite these limitations it claims the survey "gives a better picture of the illness of the world" than any available since before the war.

What a dread picture is presented in the above report on present world conditions. What a spectacle must the civilized (?) world present to the Lord as He "looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoners, to loose those that are appointed to death." (Psa. 102:19, 20.)

Does it surprise us to find that God really determines "to loose those that are appointed to death" when, so soon after the conclusion of the great global war, and the hopes expressed at the United, Nations Organization, we find conditions as above stated? Well, our God is a gracious heavenly Father, sure enough; but let it not be thought that the deliverance of those "appointed to death" is to be accomplished smoothly, from the present conditions in the world.

Various of God's prophets, as well as our Lord and the apostles, describe the complete overthrow of_ present governments and man-made institutions of every kind—religious, political, social and financial. The prophet Jeremiah vividly portrays the passing of the present order of things as follows:—"For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me, Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send thee to drink it. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them. . . . Therefore thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Drink ye; and be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more . .

. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations: He will plead with all flesh: He will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the Lord." (Jer. 25:15, 16, 27, 31, etc.)

The prophet Malachi also declares—"For, 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.) Thus we have it revealed that the greatest event in the world's history is about to take place in the near future—the complete passing of man's order of things, to make way for the Kingdom of God's dear Son. What confusion, what bewilderment this will cause to all who are trusting in any way in present-day church systems, financial institutions or other apparent strongholds of men. All these, with their leaders, will be reduced to the dust, so that throughout the Kingdom of Christ, all the willing and obedient may learn to trust only in the Deliverer who alone is worthy of all praise and worship. Thanks be to God that by His deliverance "the groaning of the prisoners" will cease, and "those appointed to death" shall be loosed to enjoy the beauty of the restored earthly paradise. "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven."

Think on these Things.

(Phil. 4:8. Convention Address.)

RECENTLY a Sydney paper reported that Professor Murdoch was asked the question whether people should be encouraged to think for themselves. He did not think so, because there are plenty of people to do their thinking. He went on to say that he thought it was not good at all, this thinking. It was a pernicious habit, because it caused too many schisms. He pointed to the fact that France was riven with different factions because they bad the audacity to think individually. But the point is in regard to us, as New Creatures; there is a difference. We should think.

Now the will or mind is symbolized by the heart: and we read in Psa. 51:10, “Create in me a clean heart, 0 God; and renew a right spirit within me.’ With an ideal state of health, there must be a healthy heart. It necessitates healthy conditions, with no weaknesses of any kind. Consequently, we should have a healthy will. That is just in harmony with the Scriptures. It says, “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” The Heavenly Father gives that to us as a message. People tend to become like their pursuits. As the Scriptures say, “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” Therefore, it is a challenge for us to think.

We, as Christians, are exhorted to be able to give a reason for the hope that is within us. It is no use taking things for granted, saying so and so said so. What do you think for yourself? It is your individual character that counts, and you cannot rest upon other people’s opinions. You have to develop an opinion of your own, a will of your own, a mind of your own, to enable you to come off conqueror. That is the requirement of the kingdom. Those who are going to be associated with the Master must be tried and proved and fitted for that glorious work that will ensue in the times of restitution of all things.

Now the point is, we must have consecrated thinking. We know what that means, our heart belongs to the Lord and our thinking is in harmony with His will.

The next point is, how are we to think? Prov. 21:5 says, “The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want.” Now the lesson we draw from that is that we should not allow our thoughts to browse in any old corner. Our thoughts want regimenting or controlling in harmony with our objective. We might say that this is only a synopsis of the subject of thinking, but we only hope it will be blessed of the Lord insofar that it will stimulate thinking and cause us to realise the value of thinking.

Now in Psa. 1:2 we read, referring to the man of God, that his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate both day and night. What does that mean? Just to read the law and word of God? No, it means to read it carefully, not carelessly and hurriedly, but to think over it and meditate upon it. The Psalmist says he meditated on the law in the night watches, whilst he lay in bed. We should not at any time sit and think of nothing at all. That is wrong. There should be activity if we are going to develop the character-likeness of the Master.

If we turn to Romans 12:1-3 it enables us to trace the steps necessary to attain that character-likeness to reach the goal—”I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” Take a sober outlook on yourself and those around you, and see in what way you can help yourself and others, and be helped by them.

Now, what should we think? You know, there is a difference between an avocation and a vocation. We say, Oh yes, our avocation or our job requires concentration. Certainly it does. There are some repetition jobs where you might be able to relax and think a bit, but the majority of them require concentration and thought if you are going to do justice to the job and to those who are employing you. But then, the point for us to remember is that in our vocation--we know what that is, “we are all called in the one hope of our calling”—it is imperative that we develop the character through thought. It is not the thoughts that come into our heads which count, but those which we dwell upon, and allow to stay there. That is the important thing. We cannot prevent the crows flying over our heads, but we can stop them making their nests there.

Now let us come to the main text. We say, Oh yes, that is all right, we put into practice the Golden Rule, even keep in mind the New Commandment, to “love one another as I have loved you.” But by studying, by thinking and analysing Phil. 4:8, we are able, perhaps, to implement that idea of developing a character-likeness of the Master.

Now we can divide this exercise of thought into two sections, positive and negative. “Whatsoever things are true.” That is God’s Word. That is true. It is what we call “the Truth.” There are so many aspects of it. There is the restoration of Israel, the riven nominal systems, things which are predicted and which we expect. ‘There is a prevailing tendency towards disintegration, and the momentum seems to be becoming more pronounced every day. We realize that is just in harmony with prophecy, it is the truth. Well, there is sufficient in the truth without thinking about the negative things. but nevertheless it is as well to keep them in mind too, and to exclude idle speculation, which often leads us astray. Another thing to exclude is gossip, evil surmisings. Are they true? No, we do not know whether they are true or not. Then, when it comes to the movies and fiction, a big percentage of it is exaggerated and not conducive to spirituality to those who are striving to attain the likeness of Christ. People say, You are too narrow, but anyone who thinks soberly knows the world’s way is not conducive to developing the image of Christ in their minds.

“Whatsoever things are honest.” Things that are noble, honourable, think on these things. The good deeds of somebody. But we may dilate on the good deeds of somebody, perhaps at the expense of somebody else. We must be careful that nobody else is ignored or overlooked. Then, on the negative side we have to see to it that there is no

hypocrisy, no intrigue, and that we do not speak about the weaknesses or follies of our brethren or our fellows. It may be true, but it is not honest, or honourable.

“Whatsoever things are just.” Equitable to all concerned, on the positive side. On the negative side, whatever encroaches upon the interests of others. But we must not become obsessed with one idea. You know, there are many periodicals which dilate upon the evils of society. If we unduly think upon these things we may become biassed. We want to remember to be just in our thoughts, and think more about the justice of God, and- how He will by no means clear the guilty, and in due time these things will be put right.

“Whatsoever things are pure.” The perfect character of God, and our Lord Jesus. The truth. All else should be painful to us. That is on the positive side. We think of the perfection of our Lord. We cannot really appreciate it, but we can continue to think on those things in connection with His life which are pure and good. On the negative side, it means excluding impurity of mind and things that will tend towards impurity. Then, we necessarily see to it that our society is pure. You remember Lot, he was vexed with the wickedness around him. Don’t we chafe, too, under the conditions at times., the wickedness and violence, and still it enhances the purity. Bad language, too, must be shunned. There are all kinds of literature, which do not stir up good thoughts, but bad. We would not waste time looking at them. The same applies to art. Some people say, “To the pure all things are pure.” But who is pure? There are lots of things, in our fallen condition, which need regulating in order that we may attain that purity without which no man shall see the Lord.

“Whatsoever things are lovely.” Think of the loveliness of Jesus. “Behold, never man spake like this man.” He had a beautiful nature and disposition, and how it was manifested, even towards little children—’’Suffer little children to come unto me.” How He wept at Lazarus’ grave. Negatively, here, we should exclude anger, hatred and strife, and vindictiveness, and contention. When we think on lovely things, these other things are relegated to the background.

“Whatsoever things are of good report.- Are they reputable? Do they bring to light the noble words or deeds or sentiments of anybody? Not necessarily in their presence, of course, as that could possibly have an adverse effect on their characters, making them proud. If we are thinking on things of good report, it will necessarily mean we will have no unprofitable rubbish. There is much muck-raking in the world, but it is not conducive to our development as New Creatures. We might think,.it is just to have these things exposed. We might touch upon them in a passing way, but to let our minds dwell on them would be just the opposite of thinking on things of good report. Better to leave them to the Lord to see to in His own good time.

So, in conclusion, it is obvious we should think on these things, and not lower the standard. That is the tendency with people of the world to-day. Our standard is high—”Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” We should see to it that everything is regulated and brought into harmony with the purifying influence of the Truth, so our new heart will be developed and fitted for that new body. We should also, as was mentioned earlier, keep company with those that so do—”not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.”

In conclusion, let us read Psalm 19:14—”Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, 0 Lord, my strength, and’ my redeemer.”