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Israel and the Holy Land in God's Plan

WE all realize that Israel and the Holy Land have been very prominently in the news of late, with the short and decisive war between Israel and the Arab nations in the Middle East early in June. People who read their Bibles must know that events happening in which Israel and the Holy Land have a part must have some connection with the Bible; indeed, must have an outstanding connection with Bible prophecy, inasmuch as the Bible, written throughout many centuries, relates events associated almost exclusively with the people who dwelt in or were closely related with the people of the Holy Land. The fact that God chose the region of the Holy Land for the creation on earth of our first parents, Adam and Eve, and placed them in the Garden of Eden in that locality, impresses us that it must be a most important region on this planet, Earth.

It is not surprising, then, to find after the Flood in Noah's day that when God selected certain men to serve Him, they were invited to inhabit the area which is now clearly defined as the Land of Israel or the Holy or Promised Land. God invited them to inhabit that land.

The name Israel first appears in the Bible in Gen. 32:27, 28. We have here a reference to the angel with whom Jacob is said to have wrestled. "And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Apparently God could see in this man Jacob such an earnest, determined, prevailing spirit that he was now given this special name of Israel. Israel was the grandson of Abraham, whose name was also changed from Abram, who was called in Gen. 14:13—"Abram the Hebrew"—because he was a descendant of Eber. So we have the names Israel and Hebrews, which are often used interchangeably. The name Hebrew signifies "crossed over", or "the other side". Abraham and his family seem to have been called Hebrews, partly at least, to express a distinction between the ancient races east and west of the River Euphrates, Abraham having "crossed over" to the west on his journey to the land which God had promised him.

God's special dealings with this people began with Abraham, as recorded in Gen. 12:1-3. "Now the Lord (Jehovah) had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." This message to Abraham was a wonderful promise indeed. If Abram obeyed God's voice, left his own country and travelled west, he

could inhabit this land God promised to him. Then read Gen. 12:6, 7, and Gen. 13:14-17. These are very definite promises. From Gen. 15:18, we read—"In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." We would like to stress that statement the Lord made—He is going to give the land to Israel from the Nile to the Euphrates. Israel is now just a little strip along the Mediterranean coast. Early in June they took the Sinai Peninsula, but this is only a small portion of what was promised to them. We know that today, as never before, this promise is on the way to fulfilment.

God's promise to Abraham was finally confirmed in Gen. 22:15-18. We remember this was the occasion when God tested Abraham in asking him to sacrifice his son of promise, Isaac. Because Abraham had taken God at His word, and was willing to sacrifice that son of promise, counting that God was able to raise him from the dead to fulfil the promise, he obtained this further manifestation of God's favor and blessing.

It is of great importance, then, to note that Isaac was the seed through whom the covenant blessings were to pass to his son Jacob. Jacob's name was changed to Israel, and we have a further important promise in 1 Chron. 16:13-18. So the covenant with Abraham was confirmed to Isaac, to Jacob and to the children of Israel.

It is good also to find reference in the New Testament confirming, as we would expect, what is stated in the Old Testament. One citation along this line is found in Heb. 11:8-11. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed . . . By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." Abraham knew he was going to pass away in death. But our Lord said on one occasion, speaking of His kingdom time, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad." Abraham saw it by faith. God's plan to bless all the families of the earth was to be carried out in that wonderful day of Christ, the Millennial Age.

Another quotation is that given by Stephen when taken before the Sanhedrin, and found in Acts 7:2-7. This is a review of the period of time from Abraham down to the time when Israel was delivered from bondage in Egypt and brought back to the promised land. In this connection we have God's instructions through Moses after the deliverance from Egypt in Exod. 19:3-6. This was a very wonderful promise to Israel in the wilderness, surely. After the giving of the Law and the entry of the Israelites into the Promised Land, we know they had varied experiences because of their disobedience to the Lord's instructions; and God allowed them to be taken into captivity for punishment. They returned under the power of Rome, and were in expectation of their promised Messiah when the first advent of Jesus was near. Jesus was sent by God especially to Israel, as stated by Paul in Gal. 4:4, 5.

Our Lord came to the people under the law of Moses. When Jesus began His ministry and selected the twelve apostles, He gave direct instructions as found in Matt. 10:5, 10; and the instructions were applicable for a period of 7 years, 3+ years before and after the Cross. "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This was God's plan first of all, that our Lord and His disciples should take their ministry to Israel only. There were plenty of "lost sheep" in Israel at that time, but most of them did not respond to the invitation of their Messiah to be brought back into harmony with their Law Covenant. Only a handful of Israelites indeed accepted Jesus, and the rest were blinded. Our Lord selected a handful from the multitude of Israel during His 3+ years' ministry. Hence it was, that when Jesus presented Himself to Israel as He rode into Jerusalem on the ass, that His disciples rejoiced, in fulfilment of prophecy, but the Pharisees, as usual, were in opposition. This record is given to us in Luke 19:37-44.

. . . And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

Later, in the 21st chapter of Luke, Jesus gave a further account of the events to follow their full rejection and crucifixion of Himself as their King. (Luke 21:20-24.) “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh . . . there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” How truly has this prophecy been fulfilled! The Israelites have been scattered into all nations since the rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah, from about A.D. 70, following Jesus’ words in Matt. 22:38, when He said, “Your house is left unto you desolate”. He knew that in a matter of hours He would be crucified.

Most Bible students agree that the “Times of the Gentiles” was a period of about 2,500 years, ending about 1914-18. This period must not be confused with another Scriptural term, “the fulness of the Gentiles”, used by the Apostle Paul in Rom. 11:25. Let us note the difference between the two similar terms. Rom. 11:25 says, “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” Here Paul is speaking of the blindness of Israel in respect of their Messiah and the heavenly calling. This blindness would continue until the full number of the Bride of Christ was taken from the Gentiles as a whole. Not that God restricted any Jews coming in during this period. Individual Jews could come in just as readily as any from the Gentiles. But the majority would be taken out from the Gentile nations. Blindness in part would remain with Israel as far as the selection of the Bride of Christ was concerned.

But Jerusalem being trodden down “until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” would be completed about 50 years ago, in 1914-1918. The Church or Bride of Christ is not yet complete.

The question might be asked, What happened when the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled? A most outstanding event was the capture of Jerusalem from the Turks in December, 1917, without bombs or gunfire. This has been described as a Divine miracle. With the capture of Jerusalem and all Palestine from the Turks, came the opening of this ancient Holy Land to immigration, and the establishment of a Jewish National Home. This was the “beginning of the end” of Gentile domination over the land of Israel, the Holy Land.

The story behind Jerusalem’s easy capture is of great interest and importance. It has been stated that as General Allenby approached with his army, he wondered how he could best take the city without too much damage. While he was trying to formulate plans for capturing, yet sparing the city, an enemy runner reached his Turkish commandant, and reported that a strong army was approaching, led by a powerful general named Allah-Bey (Allenby). The news quickly spread among the superstitious Moslem troops, and the Magic name Allenby was understood by all of them to be Allah-Bey—which meant, “The prophet of Allah.” Terrified by what to them was a sacred name, they refused to fight against a “prophet of Allah”, fearing Allah’s displeasure; and the commandant finally gave orders to hastily evacuate the holy city, ere “Allah-Bey” arrived.



[Permission to reproduce the above cartoon has been kindly granted by the London "Daily Express". This cartoon appeared in the Melbourne "Herald" on 3rd June, just two days before the outbreak of war between Israel and Arab countries. How apt is the artist's impressions, in line with Bible prophecy.]

Since the First World War it is common knowledge what progress has been made in the land of Israel. Against great odds, a Homeland has been established, and during the Second World War much persecution of the Jews hastened their return to the Holy Land. Such Scriptures as Jer. 16:14-16 seem to have their definite fulfilment in the period from about the Second World War. "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them; and I

will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks."

The "fishers" the Lord sent were inducements, to encourage the Jews to go to their land. Then, later, thousands were hunted from Europe and the northern countries. Many were lost in the process, but they will be resurrected and will have their inheritance. They will go back to the Holy Land in God's due time.

Jer. 31 helps us to see the wonderful days in which we ourselves are living as we behold the events in the Middle East, and particularly in connection with God's chosen people Israel. Read verses 1-12. We know that this prophecy speaks definitely of what has been going on, and will still go on, in the Holy Land. It does not mean that all their troubles are passed, but it does mean, as these prophecies show, that they are being established in the Holy Land to stay there forever. They are never more going to be plucked up from the Land of Promise, the land God promised to Abraham, from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates. This is to be fulfilled, perhaps even in the nearer future than we have realized.

Then in Jer. 30:18-20 we read, "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places ... Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and **I will punish all that oppress them.**" That is a definite statement by the Lord Himself. Do we think such Scriptures apply to our times? Let us hear again the Lord's message through Zechariah 12:2, 3—"Behold,

I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about . . . And in that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." This proves definitely that no-one is going to prosper in any schemings and boastings in respect of Israel and the Promised Land. "Those that burden themselves with Israel **shall be cut in pieces.**" We know that from the establishment of Israel as a State in 1948 there were those who sought to hinder its progress. We think of those opposing Israel at the present time, boasting last May that they were going to drive Israel into the sea, and made the taunting

remark that Britain and France would not be with them this time. In 1956 Britain and France were coupled with Israel for a short while. But four days was sufficient for this stunning victory. God no doubt was with Israel and gave them the ability. They probably thought they gained the victory themselves, but in the real “Jacob’s trouble” they will know for sure that the Lord delivered them from greater menacing enemies.

From Jer. 30:4-7, we read, “. . . All faces are turned into paleness! Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” Jacob (Israel) will be saved out of the trouble. Yes, but many difficult days lie ahead; see Ezek. 38:8-23. These verses seem to indicate that Israel will be “dwelling safely” when the final trouble comes upon them. “. . . Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel . . . And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood and I will rain upon him great hailstones, fire and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord, (Jehovah).” See also Ezek. 39:23-29.

From Ezek. 37:7-14, 24-28, we read of the restoration of Israel in most outstanding language. “Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.” The .’graves” is which Israel has been buried during the centuries of the Dispersion are evidently the different countries or nations in which they have been domiciled. They have been hidden in a grave condition, so to speak. Some have been in one grave, some another, but all have been “dead” as far as their national hopes were concerned. “My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen (all nations) shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.” What a prophecy that is! We accept it fully, knowing that it is absolutely sure of fulfilment, for the Lord Jehovah has spoken it on behalf of Israel.

While our subject applies to natural Israel, it is well to remember that all the time God has scattered the Israelites throughout all the nations during the Gospel Age, He has been taking out a people for His name for His heavenly kingdom, mainly from the Gentile nations. As we have seen, “blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” With this selected company complete, and Armageddon and Jacob’s trouble in the past, we read,—”The law shall go forth of Zion (the heavenly phase of the kingdom) and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (See Micah 4:1-4.)

Our subject would not be complete without reference to the wonderful resurrection hope for allmankind, including all Israel and Gentile nations who have ever lived. Our Lord Jesus “tasted death -for every man”, and so the promise is that all in the death condition “shall hear His voice, and come forth.” Israel with their Ancient Worthies as leaders on earth will have an honored place in interpreting the wonderful truths of God’s Word to the nations at large, being guided from above by Christ and His Church in heavenly power and glory. All the nations of the earth shall see the salvation of our God through the blessings He will bestow on Israel first of all. We surely rejoice in such a plan of God to bring about the salvation of humanity, all on account of the sacrifice of Christ, Israel’s Messiah, whom they rejected then, but will receive with open arms when delivered out of all their afflictions. “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord’s: and he is the governor among the nations.” (Psa. 22:27, 28.)

‘And the Philistines assembled themselves together to fight with Israel’ 1 **Samuel 13-5**

“It’s too risky, President Nasser! Maybe the Israelis are being supported by a force ever more powerful than the Americans.. .”

PEOPLES PAPER AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

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Extracts from Correspondence

ONE of our friends in another State writes:— “Hasn't the Middle East situation had everyone concerned. One of our local radio stations has a programme called 'Open Line' in which listeners can either ring or write in a brief comment on anything they wish. One morning a gentleman rang and said, 'Did the listeners realise that the Middle East situation was the beginning of Armageddon, and what were the churches doing about preparing the people for the doom to come?'

“I wrote in to the radio station, stating,—I heard a gentleman speaking of the Middle East, and asking what the churches were doing to prepare the people for the doom to come. I have enclosed a pamphlet from the church to which I belong (that was 'The Voice') which says much more concisely than I could what I wish to say, principally that it isn't doom that is coming but rather that God has shown man that he is unable to rule, and now God Himself is taking over. If the gentleman is interested I know the Berean Institute would send him any literature he would care to read. The announcer read my letter over the air, and said it was very interesting, and he was glad that I had sent it. I thought what a good little paper 'The Voice' was, and I wanted to put it where it would do the most good.”

(A request for literature on the Middle East situation was received from the area above mentioned. Supplies of “The Voice” are available to all who can use them to advantage.—B.B. Institute.)

Another friend writes from the country of Victoria as follows,—”Thank you for the pamphlets you kindly sent, especially the one on Armageddon. I am quite unable to understand how the 'orthodox' clergy can possibly go on blandly ignoring the thunder of prophecy bearing on this. It seems to me that they must regard a large portion of the Scriptures as meaningless. On one occasion, I approached a Methodist minister with some striking dissertation on prophecy that I had come across. He was a particularly fine, sincere fellow, for whom I had a warm regard, and still have. It was a matter which I thought would be well within the competence of any clergyman to pass a clear judgment upon. He thought the subject was interesting, but admitted that he knew nothing whatever about it—that the theological college he had gone through had never taught anything along that line. Even so, I marvelled that any student of theology could possibly be without any knowledge or opinion upon a matter which bore so directly and forcefully upon his own philosophy. But so it has been throughout my experience with orthodox churches. I have attended three of them (different denominations) pretty regularly over a number of years, but I had no help from them at all. I have pondered over religious questions from quite an early age, but so far from ever getting any assistance from the clergy, they only confounded me further. I finally gave up going to church altogether, because it was merely a waste of time. Their whole teaching seems to amount to no more than this—live a good, honest life, love this mysterious 3 in 1 God whom you cannot possibly understand, and some day, either when you die, or at some other time so remote that it is really not worth thinking about, you will go to heaven, wherever that may be. Now let us pray.

“It is no wonder that church-going, for those who still practise it, is mostly a mere convention, and makes no sort of impact upon practical living. For them, the Bible is only a book to be kept in the house in case the parson should call. I am sorry for these people today. Many of them realise that the world is sliding rapidly into calamity, and they have nothing whatever to hope for. I am pretty sure that it is this

consciousness of futility and impending doom that is responsible for much of the wild, irresponsible behaviour amongst young people. As the situation worsens, as I expect that it will do rapidly now, we must be prepared for increasing social disorder.

“There can be no mistaking the seriousness of events in Israel and the Middle East. They seem to be shaping up exactly as prophesied, and are likely to move rapidly. The very nations which supported Israel in the past are now forsaking her, and it is not difficult to foresee that presently she will be on her own, as far as earthly support goes. The gravity of the position must be apparent to all, Bible students and others alike, but, of course, we have lived for so long now in the shadow of disaster that no one worries about it.

“I usually listen to the Frank and Ernest dialogues from the Geelong station on Sunday mornings. That is an excellent feature, yielding more information to the genuine seeker in one session than he would learn from going to church for twelve months.”

(Copies of the booklet, “Armageddon—Then World Peace” are gladly supplied to all desiring these.—
B.B. Institute.)

USED POSTAGE STAMPS

We are sorry that no mention was made in last issue of “Peoples Paper” of the assistance to the General Tract Fund received from the sale of used postage stamps, supplied by a number of our friends, and prepared for sale by much labour on the part of a Sister in South Australia. An amount of ;18.30 should have been shown as a separate item from the General Tract Fund receipts listed as donations. Sincere thanks is extended to all who have contributed to this assistance to the work, as unto the Lord.

Those Who Serve

(Convention Address)

THE Gospels and Epistles are full of advice and directions for those who serve. This exercise is an endeavour to recapture the conditions that may well have been prevailing on a certain evening in the town of Bethany just prior to our Lord's crucifixion. No doubt we are all aware of the circumstances that led to that all-important supper given in honour of the Lord after Lazarus had been raised from the tomb. The account is covered in John 12:1-11; Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9. It would seem that some weeks previous to the supper Jesus had retired into the precincts of a town 20 miles north of Jerusalem after the raising of Lazarus because of the violent hostility of the Jewish leaders towards Him. Jesus fled, not that He feared them, but to enable them with the absence of His presence to cool their hatred and view all the circumstances in a favorable atmosphere. But the hasty departure of Jesus prevented the little family at Bethany from showing in some tangible way their gratitude. However, it is easy to see they determined that at the very first opportunity there would be a celebration of thanksgiving. Lazarus was so well beloved of all the people of the village that it is not surprising to find them partaking in the organising of a supper, held in the house of one Simon the leper. No doubt he was one-time a leper, and he too would be eager to swell the ranks of others who had come under the notice of the Lord and were eagerly awaiting an opportunity to demonstrate their gratitude for blessings received. Simon may even have been a relative of the family that occupies our attention just now in a special way, that is, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

If all the people who benefited by Jesus' ministry came together in one place to honor Him it certainly would have taken more than the house of Simon to accommodate them. With the supper at last organised, since Jesus had arrived here once again six days before His last Passover, Mary's house could not have been large enough for the supper.

But Simon offered his, and we find the honored guests included the Lord Himself, His twelve disciples and Lazarus. Then there were others too, seated at the supper: Simon, and his friends; and without doubt others of the community at Bethany who would not be denied this favored opportunity of thanksgiving. We should like to look a little closer into this festival occasion, to bring the circumstances closer to our affections and understanding, and thus, even at this great distance, share with these dear folk this particular evening. It must have been a very joyous occasion, one where everybody could really cooperate whole-heartedly, a happy disposition indeed for those who serve.

It will be conceded without question that the people of whom we speak are typical of others of similar disposition and habits in each age, dispensation, and generation. There are many Simons, Marys, Marthas, some like Lazarus, and many like those unnamed friends in the background who in some practical way contribute to the success of the supper. A Convention could be likened to it: some prominent, some not so prominent, and many in the background who contribute in sympathy and help to make possible the attendance of others.

"And Martha served." On a previous occasion when only three or four were present, she complained of Mary's laziness, just sitting at Jesus' feet while she herself so busy with many things. We like to boost our ego by discovering faults with others, comparing ourselves with ourselves. Jesus prophesied to the great Apostle Peter about his duties and service; he was to feed His sheep, feed His lambs, and Jesus said if he did this faithfully he would be crucified for his service. What a revelation this would have been; what a task—however could one meet all the obstacles bound to be met? But what was Peter's chief concern when told about this job and its duties? He was more concerned to know about the Apostle John. He had not learned that "to his own master everyone is responsible." He was advised to mind his own business; "Follow thou me." Just imagine a big pastoral company appointing a manager on one of the

huge sheep stations in the north, and after being told of his duties in regard to cattle, sheep, etc., the first question the new manager asks, “But what about my neighbor; what does he have to do?”

If we are busy comparing spiritual things with spiritual things, we shall have more than enough to engage our full attention. In the parable of the talents the extra talents were gained **in serving**. The faithful servants did not postpone their wholehearted devotion until they were more accomplished. Their glory, like Mary’s, like Martha’s, like Lazarus’s and Simon’s, at this great supper, was in the Lord. Martha was not peeved that Mary was absent from the bustle, and serving the Lord in a seemingly inactive way. Martha did not esteem this menial task as below her dignity; she was, in effect, taking the towel and bowl and washing their feet, and happy to be serving; as they all were, each in a particular way.

Mary, in a different way, is also serving. She brings her costliest treasure, an alabaster box of spikenard, costing at least a full year’s wages for an average worker. After she had broken the box, letting its contents run on the Master’s head, down over His skirts to lodge on His feet, there was an outcry against such waste. Would not a small portion of it have done just as well, leaving the balance available for sale, the proceeds going to the poor? Jesus excused her lavish gift on the ground it was for a bigger purpose than a thanksgiving offering. Her purpose in this service is twofold: firstly, no amount of ointment, costly though it be, could repay her debt of gratitude for restoring a dead brother after four days in the tomb. What

huge sums today are paid in hospital fees, and for operations in an attempt to salvage even a small remnant of the earthen vessel containing the condemned spark of life. And, secondly, she serves as Jesus says, in anointing Him beforehand, anticipating His death that will precede His resurrection to Kingly glory. How appropriate is this anointing if it could be seen to follow the triumphant entry into Jerusalem that day (Matt. 21). What a service, what an honor, no wonder Jesus decreed that it would be marked in history for a perpetual reminder.

Lazarus is also serving in still yet another way. Anyone who witnesses to Jesus is a servant of the Lord. Lazarus is one of the most obscure and at the same time one of the most powerful servants of Christ; so powerful has this obscure man become that the enemies of Jesus have decided that he too must die with Jesus. But what has he **done** to merit all this attention, that makes him next to Jesus in importance at this feast? Most people think the only way to serve God is to actively **do** something, **say** something, or discharge some responsibility to bring one into public focus. Lazarus puts these notions to flight; he has not said a word, nor done anything to draw publicity to himself. The full extent of his service is that he allows Christ to use him. Has this been a fixed characteristic of Lazarus all his life? If all he does **now** is allow Jesus to love him, did he do more on those frequent visits of the Master to Bethany to so engage His attention that it drew out the love of Jesus in that special way where it is recorded on rare occasions that Jesus loved so-and-so. Even the unnamed rich young ruler said something that appealed to Jesus. Did Lazarus merit the love of all those Jews who came to mourn with his sisters, those many friends of his who complained that had Jesus been here this calamity may not have occurred? Or did he in some way endear himself to them, by just allowing himself to be loved of them? The Scriptures are silent. But they are not silent in regard to the most important experience that came his way, and all he does is to allow Jesus to love him and use him. We enquire, is this his usual pattern of behaviour? Was he as passively inactive to all those Jews who loved him so dearly that they mourn with the sisters so long? Did he do nothing more than just **allow** his sisters to love him? There is a type of person who does nothing more than allow others to lavish affection upon him—he can do nothing else. He says nothing to commend himself or distinguish himself in either word or deed—he cannot. He does nothing to help others—he cannot, but he needs a lot of help himself. He gets it, he allows it, and in getting it he helps everybody to express more of the Christian virtues than possible in any other way. Note how well Lazarus serves his Master, as well and as powerful as the chief apostles at this supper, on this most memorable night, when it

is recorded that all he did was to eat and drink with Jesus.

This is not new to him; he has done it before during those frequent visits of the Master to Bethany. He is the same to everybody, and everybody who loves the sisters loves Lazarus, even Jesus. “Lord”, said the message sent in haste to Jesus, “he whom thou lovest is sick.” Those few words, delivered to Jesus in His secret hide-away, in expectation that they would hasten His return, back again to where He was very recently threatened with stoning, and would certainly be in grave danger (the disciples opposed His return and when they could not prevail they resigned themselves to death if they went back to Judea), and the fact that they brought Jesus back to create circumstances that precipitated His suffering and death, prove the **intense love** they all had for Lazarus. Why should this be so, for Lazarus is not credited with doing anything of note, he doesn’t utter a word, do a thing, goes nowhere (except to the tomb)? Was he, due to circumstances beyond his control, one of those people who just draw out from others sympathy, compassion, affection, and love? Was he a “shut-in”? If he was, many question marks disappear.

In one of the most appealing and true-to-life sketches of the great novelist, Charles Dickens, “A Christmas Carol”, we read of the underpaid, overworked employee of that unscrupulous miser, Scrooge, Mr. Bob Cratchit, Mrs. C., a lot of children, the youngest of whom is “Tiny Tim”. He “bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame.” There was this Christmas dinner, and Bob proposed “A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears, God bless us.” This toast all the family reechoed, down to Tiny Tim, who said, “God bless us, everyone,” He sat very close to his father’s side, upon his little stool, “Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him.” Dickens goes on to create those conditions where it is suggested to Scrooge that Tiny Tim is very ill. To this, the miser, now troubled by his conscience, asks, “Tell me if Tiny Tim will live.” He is told “there is a vacant seat in a poor chimney corner, and a crutch without an owner.” This is too much for Scrooge, who pitifully pleads that Tiny Tim will be spared. He is answered in words that the old miser himself used, “If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.” This he cannot endure and vows, that given the opportunity he will be a second father to the child, to Tiny Tim, who, like so many others down through the ages and even among us today, who do nothing, say nothing, exist to allow others to shelter and love them, their helplessness generating in other hearts the love of God. Dickens invents in this dramatic and human story events surrounding the life, death and restoration of Tiny Tim. The story ends with great rejoicing and thanksgiving. The supper was given to Jesus out of gratitude for the restoration of Lazarus to his usual place in the home, subject as he always had been, to the infirmities of the flesh. Despite the infirmities, what a happy home it had been; then disrupted by death; now restored to former conditions.

But if Lazarus was a “shut-in” why didn’t Jesus heal him? Did Jesus heal all and sundry? The Great Physician certainly healed many a broken heart and limb. But in His own town of Nazareth where He preached one of the greatest

sermons of all time, outlining His Messianic work, no one benefited materially although they all wondered at the gracious words. Why did not Jesus heal all the crippled and infirm at the Pool of Bethesda? Why did Paul have to suffer an affliction all his life? Why did the blind man have to endure for thirty years one of the worst afflictions, for no fault of his own or his parents? Timothy had stomach trouble and often infirmities. Epaphroditus, “a brother and companion in labor and fellow-soldier” to Paul is held in high affection as a brother in the Truth, was sick “nigh unto death”. Why did not Paul heal them since he had the power to cure, even to raising the dead (Acts 20:10)? Could it be that God is pleased to receive believers just as they are, just as the Truth finds them, in sickness or in health, in poverty or in wealth? Does God insist that full restitution to Adamic perfection is a necessary qualification for service? If not, what degree of Adamic stature is necessary before service and witness are acceptable in the Christian school of worship?

Do we not sing, “Just as I am, without one plea?”

There are many like Martha, Mary, Simon, active and loving in their fields, and there are others, here and there, like Lazarus, inactive and yet loving and powerful in their field. It is not for us to criticise **how** one serves but to gratefully co-operate with those who **do** serve.

Next to Jesus at the supper is Lazarus—what a sight. So magnetic is it that Jews thronged in streams from Jerusalem in such large numbers that the priests became alarmed, “the whole world has gone after him,” they complained. It is not every day in the week that one can see a living corpse eating and drinking with his Deliverer. The signal fact for all to see was that many folk were serving the Lord in divers ways and all happy to be doing it out of gratitude for all His benefits. How pleased must Simon the leper have been to make his house available for this auspicious occasion. We must not overlook this supper was given under the shadow of the new law that compelled anyone knowing the whereabouts of Jesus to betray Him. Anyone who affiliated with Jesus came under censure from the Jewish leaders. To publicly scorn that law and entertain the Master, to publicly proclaim His entertainment and invite all who want to see for themselves would have uncomfortable consequences for the person acting as host to Jesus and Lazarus.

These remarkable and happy proceedings are suddenly jolted by unexpected events: Mary broke an alabaster box of precious ointment over the Master’s head, the contents flowing down His skirtsto His feet, which she proceeded to wipe with her hair. The disciples, prompted by Judas, complained of this utter waste and began to be angry with Mary, murmuring against her. Coming from such close and important friends of Jesus, this must have deeply grieved her, for Jesus comes to her aid, defending her action in that she was anticipating the Messiah’s burial, anointing Him beforehand for that crisis in His life that would affect the whole world. He re-directs their thinking: the hour had come for those folk who took such pleasure in serving Him to now consider how He is about to serve them. Instead of exercising their thoughts about Lazarus and the empty tomb they are apprised that the Master Himself is at the point of a similar experience and this fact should be the all-important truth for consideration. They were overcome with gratitude for the mercy recently shown them, but He is about to do something even more merciful and greater by far than the raising of Lazarus. This should act as a pointer to His own death and resurrection. These good people are thanking God for a gift small in comparison with that great Gift soon to be consummated. He assures He came not to be ministered unto but to serve and give His life a ransom for all. Lazarus is thanking Him and witnessing to His power and love in attending this supper; soon the position will be reversed: Christ will knock on the door of their and our hearts and be the Host as He invites to a bigger and better supper, prepared by God Himself before the foundation of the world, that all those worthy servants of old dispensations desired to attend. Mary’s act of love and devotion became a Divine prophecy, one that Jesus said would be remembered for all time, for it was associated with the breaking of something more costly than an alabaster box of ointment: His body was soon to be broken for all, and His precious blood would far exceed the costly spikenard. Additionally, as it was applied on the Altar, the incense of its virtue would fill the whole world. The incense from the spikenard filled the whole house; its remembrance has also filled with incense the House of God through the Gospel Age. Jesus had arrested death’s claim on one life, from a tomb in Bethany. Because of His service and faithfulness all that are in their graves will hear His voice and come forth. By comparison this costly expression of gratitude for one man’s deliverance will be insignificant when placed beside His gift for mankind. What can be given by humanity as fitting compensation for His sacrifice? Lazarus will die again, his escape from death is temporary. Yet see how grateful all the people are. What should be the reaction by those in Christ who have eternal life—no temporary cheating of death—”This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,” and “he that believes, though he die, shall live.” This is made possible because our Lord and Master became the Greatest Servant for all time among those who serve.

Pilgrimage Ended

TOWARDS the end of May last our Sister O'Brien finished the earthly way in hospital in Tasmania after appreciating and rejoicing in the truths of God's Word for a number of years.

About eleven years ago Sister O'Brien was attracted by the broadcast messages from 3GL Geelong, and kept in touch with us from time to time, and studied the literature with her Bible as she moved about various country areas. Coming to Melbourne later she appreciated the meetings for Class Bible study, etc., and attended at every opportunity, realising how satisfying is God's Plan for human salvation through the sacrifice of Christ.

Of a humble and lowly disposition, our dear Sister exhibited the true Christian spirit of meekness, and gladly sacrificed earthly things to help the Lord's cause in a most unselfish manner. She loved the Lord very dearly, and we feel that by His grace she has gained the abundant entrance into His kingdom, now in this end of the age, when the Lord is "making up His jewels."

A very good Oxford Bible, with References, India paper, thumb index, Brevier clear type, Persian Morocco binding,

is now available at \$9.50. Same Bible with Concordance and Subject Index at \$10.50.

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 \$4.00, plus 15 cents postage.

FRANK & ERNEST TALKS Melbourne, 3 XY, 211 M. Sundays 8 p.m.

Geelong, 3GL, 222 M. Sundays 10 a.m.

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