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The Hidden Mystery

Col, 1 :26

WHILE mankind was under the discipline of evil, and unable to understand its necessity, God repeatedly expressed His purpose to restore and bless them through a coming deliverer. But who that deliverer should be was a mystery for four thousand years, and it only began to be clearly revealed after the resurrection of Christ, in the beginning of the Christian or. Gospel Age.

Looking back to the time when life and Edenic happiness were forfeited by our first parents, we see them under the just penalty of sin filled with sorrow, and without a ray of hope, except that drawn from the obscure statement that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Though in the light of subsequent developments this is full of significance to us, to them it was but a faint and glimmering light. Nearly two thousand years rolled by with no evidence of a fulfilment.

About two thousand years after, God called Abraham, and promised that his seed should bless all the families of the earth. This looked as though God still held to His previously expressed purpose, and was now about to fulfil it. Time sped on; the promised land of Canaan was not yet in his possession; they had yet no offspring, and Abraham and Sarah were growing old. Abraham reasoned that he must help God to fulfil His promise; so Ishmael was born. But his assistance was not needed, for in due time Isaac, the child of hope and promise, was born. Then it seemed that the promised ruler and blesser of nations had come. But no: years rolled by, and seemingly God's promise had failed; for Isaac died, and his heir, Jacob, also. But the faith of a few still held firmly to the promise, and was sustained by God; for "the covenant which He made with Abraham" was assured by God's "oath unto Isaac, and confirmed to Jacob . . . and to Israel for an everlasting covenant."-1 Chron. 16:16, 17.

When at the time of Jacob's death his descendants were first called the TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL, and recognized of God as a "chosen nation" (Gen. 49:28; Deut. 26:5) , the expectation that this nation as a whole, as the promised seed of Abraham, should possess Canaan, and rule and bless the world, seemed to be on the eve of realization; for already, under the favour of Egypt, they were becoming a strong nation. But hope was almost blasted and the promise almost forgotten when the Egyptians, having gained control of them, held them as slaves for a long period.

Truly God's promises were shrouded in mystery, and His ways seemed past finding out. However, in due time came Moses, a great deliverer, by whose hand God led them out of bondage, working mighty miracles on their behalf. Before entering Canaan this great deliverer died; but as the Lord's mouthpiece he declared, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me." (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22.) This gave a further insight into God's plan, showing that not only would their nation, as a whole, be associated in some way with the future work of ruling and blessing, but that one to be selected from among them would lead to victory and to the fulfilment of the promise. Then Joshua, whose name signifies deliverer, or saviour, became their leader, and under him they won great victories, and actually entered the land promised in the covenant. Surely then it seemed that the true leader had come, and that the promise was about to have complete fulfilment.

But Joshua died, and they made no headway as a nation until David, and then Solomon, were given them as kings. There they reached the very zenith of their glory; but soon, instead of seeing the promise accomplished, they were shorn of their power, and became tributary to other nations. Some held fast the promise of God, however, and still looked for the great deliverer of whom Moses, Joshua, David and Solomon were only types.

About the time when Jesus was born, all men were in expectation of the Messiah, the coming king of Israel and, through Israel, of the world. But Israel's hope of the glory and honour of their coming king, inspired as it was by the types and prophecies of His greatness and power, caused them to overlook another set of types and prophecies, which pointed to a work of suffering and death, as a ransom for sinners, necessary before the blessing could come. This was prefigured in the Passover before they were delivered from Egypt, in the slaying of the animals at the giving of the law covenant (Heb. 9:11-20; 10, 8-18), and in the Atonement sacrifices performed year by year continually by the priesthood. They overlooked, too, the statement of the prophets, "who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (1 Peter 1:11.) Hence, when Jesus came as a sacrifice, they did not recognize they knew not the time of their visitation. (Luke 19:44.) Even His immediate followers were sore perplexed when Jesus died; and sadly they said, "We trusted it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." (Luke 24:21.) Apparently, their confidence in Him had been misplaced. They failed to see that the death of their leader was a ratification of the New Covenant under which the blessings were to come, a partial fulfilment of the covenant of promise. However, when they found that He had risen from the tomb, their withered hopes again began to revive (1 Peter 1:3), and when He was about to leave them, they asked concerning their long-cherished and oft-deferred hope, saying, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" That their hopes were in the main correct, though they might not know the time when they would be fulfilled, is evident from our Lord's reply: "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father hath put in His own power."—Acts 1:6, 7.

What turn has God's plan now taken? must have been the query of His disciples when Jesus had ascended; for we must remember that our Lord's teachings concerning the Kingdom were principally in parables and dark sayings. He had said to them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; howbeit, when the spirit of truth is come, it will guide you into all truth." "It shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 16:12, 13; 14:26.) So they could not understand before the Pentecostal blessing came.

Even then, it was some time before they got a clear, full understanding of the work being done, and its relation to the original covenant. (Acts 11:9; Gal. 2:2, 12, 14.) However, it would seem that even before they fully and clearly understood, they-were used as the mouthpieces of God, and their inspired words were probably clearer and deeper expressions of truth than they themselves fully comprehended. For instance, read James' discourse in which he says: "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name [a bride]. And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written, 'After this [after this people from the Gentiles has been taken out] I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David [the earthly dominion] which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.' "—Acts 15 :14-16.

James began to read in God's providence, in the sending of the Gospel through Peter to the first Gentile convert and through Paul to Gentiles in general, that during this age believing Jews and Gentiles were to be alike favoured. He then looked up the prophecies and found it so written; and that after the work of this Gospel age is completed, then the promises to fleshly Israel will be fulfilled. Gradually the great mystery, so long hidden, began to be understood by a few—the saints, the special "friends" of God.

Paul declares (Col. 1:27) that this mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, now made manifest to His saints, is

"CHRIST IN YOU, THE. HOPE OF GLORY"

This is the great mystery of God which has been hidden from all previous ages, and is still hidden from all except a special class—the saints, or consecrated believers. But what is meant by "Christ in you"? We have learned that Jesus was anointed with the holy spirit (Acts 10:38), and thus we recognize Him to be the Christ—the anointed—for the word Christ signifies anointed. And the Apostle John says that the anointing which we (consecrated believers) have received abideth in us. (1 John 2:27.) Thus the saints of this Gospel age are an anointed company—anointed to be kings and priests unto God (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 Pet. 2:9) ; and together with Jesus, their Chief and Lord, they constitute Jehovah's Anointed—the Christ

In harmony with this teaching of John, that we also are anointed, Paul assures us that this mystery which has been kept secret in ages past, but which is now made known to the saints, is that the Christ (the Anointed) is "not one member, but many," just as the human body is one, and has many members; but as all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Anointed—the Christ. (1 Cor. 12:12-28.) Jesus is anointed to be the Head or Lord over the Church, which is His body (or His bride, as expressed in another figure—Eph. 5:25-30) , and unitedly they constitute the promised 'Seed"—the Great Deliverer: "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."—Gal. 3:29.

The Apostle carefully guards the Church against any presumptive claims, saying of Jesus that “God bath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body,” “that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.” (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18.) Yet, under the figure of the human body, he beautifully and forcibly shows our intimate relationship. This same oneness Jesus also taught, saying, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.”—John 15:5.

This is indeed a wonderful message, and, as we come to the Word of God to inquire concerning our great high calling, we find the prophets all eloquent in proclaiming the grace [favour or blessing] that is come unto us (1 Peter 1 :10) ; while types and parables, and hitherto dark sayings, now become luminous, shedding their light on the “narrow way” in which the anointed [Christ] company is called to run for the prize now disclosed to view. This was truly a mystery never before thought of—that God intends to raise up not only a deliverer, but a deliverer composed of many members. This is the “high calling” to which the consecrated believers of the Gospel age are privileged to attain. Jesus did not attempt to unfold it to the disciples while natural men, but waited until at Pentecost they were anointed— begotten to the new nature. From Paul’s explanation we know that none but “new creatures” can now appreciate or understand this high calling. He says: “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom [plan] which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes [chief ones] of this world knew; . . . as it is written, ‘Eye bath not seen, nor ear heard, neither bath entered into the heart of man, the things which God bath prepared for them that love Him;’ but God bath revealed them unto us by His spirit”-1 Cor. 2:6-14.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul opens up the entire mystery, and shows how the Abrahamic covenant is to be fulfilled. He shows that the Law given to Israel did not interfere with the original covenant (Gal. 3:15-18), and that the seed of Abraham which is to bless all nations is Christ. (Verse 16.) Then, carrying out the idea already alluded to, that the Christ includes all anointed of the spirit, he says: “For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ; . . . and if ye be Christ’s then are YE [together with Jesus] Abraham’s seed, and heirs, according to the promise made to Abraham. (Verses 27, 29.) Following up the same line of reasoning, he shows (Gal. 4) that Abraham was a type of Jehovah, Sarah a type of the covenant or promise, and Isaac a type of Christ (head and body) ; and then adds, “We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. (Verse 28.) Thus the plan of God was hidden in types until the Gospel age began the development of the Christ.

There has existed a necessity for keeping this mystery hidden, else it would not have been so kept. It was necessary, because to have revealed the plan in full to mankind would have been to frustrate it. Had men known, they would not have crucified either the Lord of glory or the Church which is His body. (1 Cor. 2:8.) Not only would the death of Christ, as the price of man’s redemption, have been interfered with, had not the plan been kept a mystery from the world, but the trial of the faith of the Church, as sharers in the sufferings of Christ, would thereby have been prevented also; for “The world knoweth us not [as His joint-heirs] because [for the same reason that] it knew Him not.”-1 John 3:1.

The greatness of the mystery, so long kept secret, and hidden in promises, types and figures, and the wonderful grace bestowed on those called to fellowship in this mystery (Eph. 3:9), suggest to us that the work to follow its completion, for which for six thousand years Jehovah has kept mankind in expectation and hope, must be an immense work, a grand work, worthy of such great preparations. What may we not expect in blessings upon the world, when the veil of mystery is withdrawn and the showers of blessing descend! It is this for which the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now, waiting for the completion of this mystery—for the manifestation of the Sons of God, the promised “Seed,” in whom they shall all be blessed.—Rom. 8:19, 21, 22.

Proposed New Edition of “Foregleams of the Golden Age.”

As the second edition of “Foregleams of the Golden Age” is nearly exhausted, and as it is such a great help in spreading the light of truth, this enquiry is presented to all readers to determine how many copies they would be prepared to take if a new edition were published shortly. Some friends may be prepared to order a dozen copies or more, others may order up to half a dozen and still others may order one or two copies; whatever your desire may be, kindly let us know. It is not possible to quote the likely price as yet, but it will no doubt be somewhat dearer than the present edition, in view of ruling prices. If you wish to help in this matter, and continue to assist others with the truths contained in this book, let us hear from you shortly.

Italy Becomes a Republic.

Another Dynasty Extinguished. The House of Savoy's Exit.

UNDER the above headings an interesting review of the history of Italy appeared in the Literary Supplement of the Melbourne "Age" on June 22nd. Extracts from this article are as follows:

"After 85 years' reign by the House of Savoy, Italy's monarchy has ended following the plebiscite in which a republic vote was recorded. By a majority reported to total nearly 2,000,000, the people of Italy voted to end the monarchy, and King Umberto has followed other members of his family into exile. Umberto has been king . for only a month, his father, Victor Emmanual, having abdicated in his favour on May 9th.

"Confessed, war-torn, hungry Italy has no* decided on republic status, and its reigning house has been added to the list of dynasties extinguished by the war. Italy emerged as a free nation only 85 years ago. The Lombard invasions and the rise of the Papal States broke the unity of Italy early in the Middle Ages, and from then on emperors and popes, kings of Naples and dukes of Milan, dreamed in turn of restoring the 'kingdom of Italy,' But its five chief powers—Venice and Florence, Milan and Naples, and the Pope—seldom united of their own accord. France and Spain made Italy a battle ground of rivalry; and the substitution of Austria, following the French Revolution, as the chief controlling power made the outlook even more gloomy.

"Brave blood was many times shed in the hope of remaking Italy. In 1820 and 1830 revolts were crushed by Austrian troops. Then the idealistic republican, Giuseppe Mazzini, organised his new revolutionary society called 'Young Italy.' While King Charles Albert battled unsuccessfully against the Austrians, Mazzini set up a brave but ill- starred republic in Rome. It fell to French soldiers of Napoleon III, and Italy was as before a dark realm of Austrian and Bourbon tyranny in the north and south with the temporal power of the Papacy between. Only Sardinia-Piedmont under its new hero, King Victor Emmanuel II, kept its constitution and the Italian tricoloured flag. This was the seed from which Italian unity and liberation grew. Sardinia-Piedmont grew strong in resource and in alliances.

"Victor Emmanuel's shrewd Minister, Count Camillo Benso di Cavour, realised that Italy could be unified only with help from abroad. He cleverly won the alliance of Napoleon III, and in 1859 Austria was foolish enough to declare war. The outcome was that France and Sardinia-Piedmont defeated the Austrians, and so won Lombardy for United Italy. Then the famous soldier of fortune, Guiseppe Garibaldi, gathered about him his thousand volunteers and stormed the island of Sicily and then the mainland part of the kingdom of Naples. Everywhere he was hailed as a liberator. The people drove out the hated Bourbon king. There remained only the Papal States and Venetia to be joined to the new-made Italian nation when in March, 1861, Victor Emmanuel of Sardinia was proclaimed king. Venetia was gained in 1866 after ,Austria was defeated by Prussia in alliance with Italy.

Voluntary Prisoners.

"Rome alone was now outside the Italian kingdom. Lack of that central and dividing strip of territory was a very real handicap. French troops still guarded the Pope's sovereignty and Victor Emmanuel declined to attack them lest all that had been accomplished be undone. He waited. In 1870 the Franco-Prussian war forced France to withdraw her troops. The Roman people welcomed the army which Victor Emmanuel marched into Italy's ancient capital. Pope Pius XI withdrew into the Vatican, where he and his successors remained 'voluntary prisoners' until the Concordat of 1929 between Italy and the Holy See recognised the temporal power of the Pope as sovereign ruler over the Vatican."

The news that Italy's monarchy has now ended is of particular significance to Bible Students, because it is another indication of the approaching end of this present world order. The following explanations of parts of Revelation 17, mainly from the work "The Revelation of Jesus Christ", should be of much interest to all.

The vision of this chapter 17 is one introductory to the judgments of Babylon, and explanatory to St. John of its causes and reasonableness. Such is God's usual method, when about to execute any very notable act of vengeance. He shows His Church its justice beforehand; thereby at once vindicating His own honour, and giving warning to such of His people as may thus far have been deceived by the offending party, to separate from it, and so escape its imminent doom.

Let us note the significance of the words of verse 3 of Rev. 17. "And he (the angel) conducted me, in spirit, into a desert." The spirit that St. John is represented as being in, and the desert or wilderness into which he was conducted, are doubtless symbolical and have special reference to the state and viewpoint necessary for one in order to understand

the vision. And this fact is recognised by the Revelator, who shows that all who would get a true view of Babylon must, in spirit, take their position with the true people of God “in the wilderness”--in the condition of separation from the world and worldly ideas and mere forms of godliness, and in the condition of entire consecration and faithfulness to and dependence upon God alone. “So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman, . . . Babylon.”—(Rev. 17:1-5.)

We may learn in a general way what the harlot woman represents by contrasting her with another symbolic woman that St. John saw (Rev. 12:1). A woman is a common symbol employed in the New Testament Scriptures to represent the Church of Christ. Especially is this true in the Revelation. The pure Church is represented by a pure, chaste woman, indeed, a virgin; the false Church by an impure, fallen woman.

The Woman Sitting On Seven Mountains.

To those familiar with Church history there would seem to be no need of a Divine interpretation concerning what particular church is described by the Babylonian harlot. In view of the fact, however, that it is prophesied that all nations would be deceived into thinking that the church system represented was the true Church, the revealing angel gives the information concerning what church is referred to in the words: “The woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth.” The angel’s words clearly point to but one city, and that is Rome, for Rome was the only city that reigned over the kings of the earth in St. John’s day, or since. It is the only church that has taken the name of a city. It is the only city that has had a church hierarchy that has exercised such a far-reaching dominion over nations and peoples and tongues. Furthermore, the Roman city is identified in the further explanation of the angel: “The seven heads are seven mountains (hills) on which the woman sitteth.” Who is not aware that this is a well-known feature of the city of Rome?

The name Babylon, applied by the spirit to the Church of Rome, expresses her character, for Babylon means mixture—confusion. (See Lev. 18:23.) This union of the woman (Church) with the beast (empire) constitutes the spiritual harlotry of which she is guilty.

But the same (Babylon) applies to her entire family; her daughters inherit both her nature and name, for she is a “mother of harlots,” and her works they do. Some of her daughters have followed very closely in her footsteps, in mixing church and state. Such are The Church of England and other state churches. And such would other daughters be, also, if they could find empires willing to support them.

The same spirit of confusion—the church walking in unlawful union with the world—is seen on every hand. The Church (nominal) and the world walk hand in hand, unite their interests, and make merry together. It is the worldly element and its wealth that is sought by every sect to support and sustain the Church in the degree of luxury she wishes to enjoy. Alas, the name Babylon is emblazoned on the brow of every sectarian system the world over! (Let every true saint consider these words.)

Passing over other interesting points we read in verse 9, “Here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains (hills) on which the woman sitteth.” The angel, as we have already noted, explained these words as referring to the seven-hilled city of Rome. He further states: “And the kings are seven; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come, and when he may come he must remain a little while.” This is quite generally understood to represent the seven successive forms of government that have ruled from the city of Rome. Our understanding of this matter is, that St. John was transported in spirit from the Isle of Patmos, and from the year 96 A.D. down the stream of time to 1799, when the harlot woman is represented as being “drunken with the blood of the saints”—the time when Papacy’s judgments had begun, by the humiliation and dethronement of the Pope by Napoleon. At this time five of the heads had fallen, and the sixth head, the Roman Republic was ruling. St. John is thus represented as seeing the judgment on the Babylonian harlot beginning. At this time (1799) the much larger part of the vision of the beast with its ten horns had met its fulfilment and was in the past. When the angel explains the vision as a whole, as given in this chapter, nearly all of it was future from 96 AD.

The historical enumeration of these heads beginning 31 B.C., when the last head of the Grecian beast, Egypt, was overthrown by the Romans, would be as follows:—(1) The Roman Republic ruling from 31 until 27 B.C.; (2) The Military Imperial government ruling until Diocletian 303 A.D.; (3) The Despotic Imperial ruling until 476 A.D.; (4) The Odoacean Dynasty until about 539 A.D.; (5) The Papacy, until it received a death wound in 1799 A.D.; (6) The Republic under Bertier for about two years, after which, Papacy was reinstated; (7) The Victor Immanuel Dynasty since 1870. The eighth form (not head) of the beast would be the future anarchistic state of the peoples (who have always constituted the body of the beast)—the peoples in a condition of anarchy.

The seventh head (Victor Immanuel Dynasty) has continued as head of Rome since September, 1870; and today

(referring to a few years ago) more than 220,000,000 Catholics are waiting and longing, vainly hoping for a restoration to Rome of Papal sovereignty; while the prophetic symbol demands, not the restoration of Papacy, or any other government, but the rising of the beast itself without a head; in other words the peoples and nations, or body of the beast without organised government, as verse 11 shows: “And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.”

This eighth is not a head, since the beast had but seven. This eighth is the beast as it is to be after the seventh or last head has fallen. This last or eighth state will be anarchy. The expression, “and is of the seven,” signifies that “the nations ('waters’ verse 15) on which the woman sat, have been of the seven; and are already taking on a separate existence as the inter-nations, or peoples of all nations.”

With what solemnity do the Lord’s true people view these world events taking place before their eyes? How true it is that the creating of 32 new cardinals by the Pope, in recent times, will not prolong the existence of the Papacy one day. It is rather a sign of weakness, a feeling of necessity for more strength, man’s strength, which passes as the flower of the field. Not only Papacy, but all present day church systems shall pass away also as St. Peter declares—”The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night: in the which the heavens (ecclesiastical systems) shall pass away with a great noise.” Before this takes place the Lord is calling out His true people unto Himself, not to another denomination or sect, but to fellowship in spirit with others of His dear people, as shown by Rev. 18:4—”Come out of her (Babylon), my people, that ye be not partaking of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” Happy are all they who can hear the Lord call through His Word and spirit, and then obey.

2KY Sydney Broadcasts.

Early last month 2KY Sydney was secured for the broadcasting of the Frank and Ernest Biblical Dialogues. Commencing on Sunday, 7th July, it is felt that this Sydney station should reach a great number of people even at the early time (for Sundays) of 8.15 a.m., and we pray for the Lord’s blessing upon this further witness over the air. Advertising cards are now ready for all who desire to assist in making these sessions known where 2KY can be heard.

Separating Yourselves.

“Separate yourselves from the people of the land.”—Ezra 10:11.

(Convention Address.)

PERHAPS it may seem strange that a text should be chosen from the midst of the Jewish Age for the basis of this talk, but there are quite a few reasons why we should take heed to God’s Word, no matter where that Word is written, or to which particular age it applies.

In this passage there are lessons for us, although we do not think or speak of these things as being a type in particular, but rather that they are ensamples to us, that we may draw particular lessons from them. That is what our beloved Apostle Paul suggested when he was mentioning this subject in his epistles to the Corinthians. “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat of the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ . . . Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come.” (1 Cor. 10:1-11.) That indicates to us clearly that in God’s Word there are very many lessons that are necessary for us, and they are very helpful also as we journey along in the Narrow Way.

Some people are inclined to think that all these things that happened to the Jews are types, arid that they picture certain things that would happen to themselves, and’ that they have a particular bearing upon doctrines and other things in a mysterious way that embraces the Christian walk in life. But the Apostle Paul tells us particularly that they are examples, and that we can draw lessons from these examples that are to our benefit, and there is no doubt that that is just what God intended when He caused the Scriptures to be written in days of old. So we would like to draw a few lessons from the experiences of the Jews up to the time this text was written.

We remember the time of Ezra. It was the time when after the years of desolation some of the Jews had returned from

the land of Babylon; amongst these were Children of Israel not only from Judah and Benjamin, but also from the other tribes as well. First of all the other tribes were mentioned specially except Levi, and Levites were then urgently sought and sent for, that they should minister to the people in the way spoken of in God's Law, that is to be teachers of the people. There was a time when there were none of these teachers among the people, until they were sought for in the land of Babylon.

We now draw your attention particularly to the covenant that the Children of Israel entered into at Mount Sinai, that is before they entered into the Promised Land at first. There is something particularly interesting to us in that Covenant, in that it illustrates to us the covenant into which we have entered, a covenant of sacrifice, as mentioned in the Psalms, whereby we walk in the footsteps of our Lord and Head and seek to do God's will, just as the Hebrews sought to do God's will when they entered into that covenant at Mount Sinai. There were certain penalties attached to the non-observance of that covenant, and likewise too, there are certain penalties in our case attached to our nonobservance, and we need to keep these things particularly in mind, because the Scriptures assure us that God would care for us, just as He cared for the Children of Israel, if we are faithful, and that the end of our journey in the Narrow Way would result in life more abundant just the same as the keeping of their covenant would result in abundant life if they were able to maintain that purity of heart and that perfect walk before God.

We remember that on many occasions the Israelites were chastised because they failed to keep that covenant.

They wandered away into the ways of the people round about them. They came into contact with those peoples to a very large extent, and in consequence got into their ways. They were not sufficiently devoted to keeping God's Law. They did not keep it in mind to the extent that they should, and it is very much the same with us to-day. If we fail in this particular aspect of keeping in mind our covenant, then we are sure to wander into the ways of those who are round about us and away from God, from His favour, and in that way we meet with the chastisement that comes as a result, because God's Word says: "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" It may not be very pleasant, but nevertheless it works out well if we are rightly exercised. It brings forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and so we realise that God's protecting care is over us, even if it is a chastening rod.

We know that the law given to Moses was written on tablets of stone, and that reminds us very forcibly of the writing of the Law of God upon the heart of each of the followers of Christ. They realise that it is necessary to be indeed a footstep follower of Christ and to do His will. We read in John's Gospel of very many occasions when Jesus said He came to do the Father's will, and that He delighted to do it, and that what the Father said was what He repeated, and so in all His thoughts He endeavoured to do what was acceptable in the Father's sight, and we should follow in His steps and make that our attitude, too. If we keep away from the perfect Law of Love, the Law of God, that is to be written in the hearts of each of the children of God, then we shall wander away just as the Hebrews did, and get into the ways of those who are not fully consecrated, those who are not in covenant relationship with God.

That would bring us into God's disfavour, and it would be necessary for us, as our text says, to "separate ourselves from the people of the land." It is just as the Apostle Paul mentioned, "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds," keeping the mind particularly upon those things of which the Lord approves. The things of the world do not have room to take root in a heart that is fully devoted to doing the will of God.

There are many difficulties and troubles, trials, with which we come in contact as we journey along in life, and so it was with the Hebrews of old. When they were entering into the Promised Land there were many foes with whom they had to contend and overcome. We recall particularly their first contact, when they came over the River Jordan and walked around the walls of Jericho. On that particular occasion, what a great sight it must have been when the people walked round on the seventh day seven times, and the walls fell flat, and they did nothing but blow the trumpet. Now that illustrates to us particularly that in the early experiences of our lives, when we fully trust God and trust in His ways, that we can experience the same thing in overcoming the obstacles that come into our path and that would prevent our developing in the Christian way. What a wonderful trust it exhibited on their behalf, as they walked round, as they were told to do by Joshua. And so it is with us. But we remember that as time went on, and a few years passed, the whole of Canaan was not subdued. And so it is with us; as we go on from time to time we find that we still have to contend with very many things that would keep us away from our full devotion to God, just as it kept those people away from full devotion to the covenant that they had made. It was not even until the reign of David that Jerusalem was captured and the Jebusites were subdued once and for all,

So we find that for very many years they encountered these obstacles, right until the time of the end of their national polity they had that defect, they had not fully subdued all the people of the land. There were still some there right to the time of our Lord. These things illustrate to us that we still have the weaknesses of the flesh to contend with, so we realise the necessity of being constantly vigilant and watchful lest these things arise and subdue us.

When Solomon reigned what a wonderful time that must have been to the people then. What prosperity and enjoyment they had! During the reign of David there were many strifes and wars with those people round about, and although David was a man after God's own heart, he was also a man of war, and that means to say he was a man who was against all those people who would draw God's people away from the pure worship that was required at the Tabernacle, and afterwards at the Temple in Jerusalem.

In our experiences, too, we have the heights as well as the depths of Christian experience, and so we come further along in the stream of time down to the time when these people were carried away captive into Babylon because of their neglect of the only True God. What a sad state of affairs that must have been! Then at the time of our text, after being in exile for so many years, some of these people who were the most devoted to God were brought back into the land, to Palestine, to their own national home, and there permitted to build up the walls of Jerusalem, and later to build up the Temple. So there is a lesson there for us, that notwithstanding the great worldly influences that may surround us and almost overwhelm us, if we keep our hearts fully devoted to God Hewill deliver us in His own due time and grant us a respite from the world, the flesh and the adversary.

Reading from the book of Ezra, the ninth chapter, we see the attitude of heart that these people had, and their desire to be acceptable in God's sight. It is the prayer that Ezra made, and that leads up to the text of our study. From the fifth verse we read, "And I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God, and said, O my God,

I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." What a realisation it was to Ezra of the depth to which his people had gone! "Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hands of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended more unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to get up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. And now, 0 our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments, which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, the land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever."

That shows quite clearly what our attitude should be before God, when we have transgressed against Him. We should always be ready to acknowledge our faults, because confession is good for us. God will hear us. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

There are many other things that happened to these people of which we would like to mention, but we wish to stress more particularly the attitude of those who are footstep followers of the Lord, its need of His grace and strength; that is, to be in an attitude of prayer and supplication. With that attitude of heart, with that desire for communion with God and willingness to confess our faults before Him, we would be in a position to receive His favour and blessing. It was because of this combination on the part of Ezra and the people who were with him that they received God's favour, and that He heard their cry. So we need to ever remember that our prayers should always be with supplication and thanksgiving to Him, who has given us such exceeding great and precious promises. We need more frequently to go to the Throne of Heavenly Grace.

Noting our text more fully we read: "Separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives." Now what does that mean, so far as we are concerned? As. Christians we have devoted our lives to God, to follow in the footsteps of our Lord and Head. Where could we draw a comparison here that would be of help to us? To "separate ourselves from the strange wives." We remember in reading this account in Ezra that the authorities, those highest in the government of these people who had come from Babylon, were foremost in transgressing against the Divine command, in that they had taken unto themselves wives of the people of the land, and God had expressly said that they were not to intermarry with these people. There is a very special injunction to us. We remember that our relationship is the spiritual relationship with God and Christ, and that we are begotten to a lively hope. We are "new creatures in Christ Jesus," and as the Apostle Paul tells us, we are "espoused as a chaste virgin unto Christ." If we go seeking other interests than those of Christ, it would indicate that we were breaking our covenant, just as these Israelites were breaking theirs by going after those strange wives. That brings to our minds the thought mentioned in another address respecting the call to come out of Babylon, "Come out of her, my people, that ye partake not of her sins, and receive not of her plagues." There we find the comparison with the unholy alliance of these particular people.

When we see the different denominations take the position that should be held by our Lord and Master, and people work for their aggrandisement, then we realise that those people who subscribe to them are in exactly the same position as those Hebrews of old who had taken these strange wives. They have taken another head besides our Lord and Saviour. We do not gain an entrance to the Kingdom by “calling upon the name of the Lord, and doing many wonderful works,” but by “doing the will of My Father,” and so it is very necessary for us all to be very careful that there is nothing whatever that comes between our Lord and ourselves to draw our hearts away from Him. He must be our all, He is the One to whom we look for the consummation of our hope, it is through Him and Him alone that God grants the great blessing of being with Him in the Kingdom.

And so, dear friends, we wish to leave this thought with you, that whatever you do, seek always to keep the mind pure, under the sole leadership of our great Leader, our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. He is the only One by whom we receive eternal life. It is only through Him that we will be granted that favour, and God grants that great blessing because of the sacrifice that He made on our behalf, and our faithfulness to Him in fulfilling the terms of our covenant.

We hope that in the years to come, when there are any trials or tribulations, we shall always seek to keep ourselves separate from the people of the land, and separate from all those influences that would draw us away from our Lord and Head, that we follow in His steps, and so may gain that great prize.

Edition of “The Plan of God—in Brief.”

An edition of the above book is just off the press. These books are very helpful for an understanding of God’s Word. Most appropriate for witness work, it- is priced at 1/- per copy, or 6 copies for 5/-, post paid. Special rates for quantities for resale or free distribution.

Pilgrim Way Ended.

The oldest of the Australia brethren, Brother A. Kidd, finished the pilgrim way on 17th June last in his 97th year, at Ringarooma, Tasmania. For many years our dear Brother Kidd has been an earnest follower of the Master, and in past years had visited these parts. It was always a pleasure to meet him and to note his sincerity and expectation of the Kingdom. A daughter of Brother Kidd’s, Sister Fry, had also accepted the truth but finished the earthly way some few years ago. We trust for our dear elderly Brother an abundant entrance into the heavenly Kingdom. Sincere sympathy is extended to the family members in their bereavement.

The following newspaper report is a witness to the life of our dear Brother Kidd:—”He was a keen student of the Bible and world history, and many were aware that he accurately foretold the happenings of the last 30 years. He took a keen interest in current events until the day of his death.”

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