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How Jesus Preached to Spirits in Prison

“Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit, by which [two experiences—death and resurrection] He preached unto the spirits in prison.”-1 Peter 3 18, 19.

THIS text has been made the basis for some peculiar presentations. From it some have deduced an intermediate state lasting between death and the resurrection. Others have claimed it as an authority for the doctrine of Purgatory. The difficulty in every case seems to be the failure to remember that the Bible always and everywhere teaches that the dead are really dead, that they know nothing, and that, therefore, it would be impossible to do any preaching to the dead humans. Undoubtedly the theory that people are more alive after they die than when they were alive is responsible for nearly all of the foolish things which we have all at some time professed to believe.

Before dismissing the thought that these “spirits in prison” are human spirits, let us note the fact that to say, “human spirits,” is an absurdity of itself, because human beings are not spirits and spirit beings are not humans. “Who maketh His angels spirits,” is the Scriptural proposition. True, we do sometimes speak of humans as possessing a spirit of life, but by this we merely mean that they possess the power or energy of life, and the same would be equally true of the lower orders of creation, beasts, fish, fowl, etc.

Again, we sometimes speak of the Church as spirit beings—begotten of the holy spirit. Thus the Apostle speaks of the natural man in contrast with the New Creature, a spirit being. To appreciate this statement we must remember that the Church class receive the begetting of the holy spirit to the end that, if faithful, they may attain unto a spirit resurrection and become spirit beings, like unto the angels and like to the Redeemer. But we are not spirits yet, except by faith—by hope. However, the context shows the Apostle had no reference to the Church, either: we were not in prison; we received the message of salvation through the Apostles.

Spirits Once Disobedient.

The spirits to whom the message was given had proven themselves disobedient, says St. Peter. He even tells us the time of their disobedience, namely, that it was “in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing.” Surely, if noticing these particulars mentioned in the context, no one would be excusable for misunderstanding this Scripture and considering it in any way applicable to humanity of our day or to

humanity in general. However, it is helpful to us to learn the full particulars of the matter. What was their disobedience, and when and how were they imprisoned?

Turning to Genesis 6:1-5, we find there the cause of the disobedience of those angels, who for a time had been permitted to see what they could do for the uplift of humanity, or, rather, permitted to demonstrate that the downward

tendency of sin is incurable except in the manner which God has already arranged through Messiah and His glorious reign of a thousand years.

Instead of those angels helping mankind out of sin they helped themselves into sin, and by so doing they increased the depravity amongst humanity until the astounding record is that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually.” The particular sin of those angels was that when they were granted the privilege of materializing — of taking human bodies for the sake of helping and instructing mankind—they misused this power and took to themselves the daughters of men for wives.

Thus these angels came gradually to prefer to live as men amongst men and to rear earthly families rather than to abide in the condition in which they were created—spirit beings, higher than humans.- Not only was this wrong in the sense that it was taking a course in opposition to the Divine arrangement, but it was wrong also because the thing was done for the cultivation and gratification of lust, and it led to their own moral defilement as well as having a baneful influence upon humanity; for we can readily see that for the angels, of superior powers and intelligence, to become leaders in lustful practices would mean a great influence upon mankind toward sin and defilement of mind and body.’

We are particularly told that the offspring of this improper union between the angels and the daughters of men were giants, both physically and mentally superior to the fallen human family—”men of renown.” And this statement, that they were “men of renown,” was at a time when manhood’s estate was reached at a hundred years, and implies that God did not interfere to hinder or stop the progress of sin for perhaps several centuries. In the meantime the race had become so corrupt that apparently only Noah and his family were uncontaminated—all others had more or less come under the influence, directly or indirectly, of these fallen angels or their giant sons. Hence, of Noah it was written (not that he was a perfect man, but), “Now Noah was perfect in his generation” (uncontaminated) and his family apparently the same. Hence these alone were saved in the ark, while all the remainder, more or less contaminated, were destroyed by the flood.

“ In Chains Of Darkness.”

It was then and there that God imprisoned those spirits, angels, who kept not their first estate, and are therefore called fallen angels, devils, demons. They were not imprisoned in some far world called hell, nor are they engaged there in stoking fires for the torture of poor humanity. Following the leading of the Scriptures we find that when the flood came they were not destroyed because, while their fleshly bodies which they assumed might indeed perish, yet they would merely dematerialize, or assume their spirit conditions again.

The record is that God cast them down, that He condemned them to an overthrow—that they might not any longer associate with the holy angels, but must be reserved in tartarus—our earth’s atmosphere. Here they were imprisoned, not in a special place, but in the sense of having their liberties restrained, “in chains of darkness.” They were no longer permitted to materialize and thus to associate with humanity. These things are distinctly told us by St. Jude and St. Peter (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4, 5)—an explanation in full harmony with the Genesis account of their fall.

Once Disobedient—Still Disobedient.

We, of course, cannot know that all of those fallen angels are still in a disloyal condition of heart. On the contrary, in harmony with our text, we may suppose that some of these fallen angels have since repented of their wrong course and it would be none too strong a way to state the matter—that any such repentant ones would surely have terrible experiences as a result. To be obliged to be in close touch and relationship with the more evil and malignant ones and to have knowledge of all their evil designs and efforts would be a terrible experience and, besides this, we may be sure that the rebellious would not hesitate to persecute the repentant ones in every conceivable manner, as they would be lawless, regardless of the Divine will.

On the other hand, the repentant ones would be obliged to restrain themselves and to not render evil for evil, knowing that this would be contrary to the Divine will. In other words, repentant ones amongst those fallen spirits, influenced by the preaching of Jesus or otherwise, would have a kind of purgatorial experience, and the very thought calls forth our sympathy.

When imprisoned or cut off from the privilege of materialization, many of the fallen spirits, we know not what proportion, continued their active opposition to God, after the manner of Satan. Hence they are spoken of as his angels, his messengers, his servants and he is spoken of as Beelzebub, the Prince of Demons. Satan, who sinned much earlier than the others, and in a different way, the Scriptures tell us was an angel of a higher rank, or a higher nature, and this superiority of his has made him the Prince or ruler over the hosts of fallen spirits.

Fighting Against God.

The fight of Satan and his fallen angels is against God, against all who are in harmony with Him, against all the regulations of righteousness, and against all the channels and servants whom the Lord may use. St. Paul's words along this line are forceful; he remarks that God's people contend not merely "with flesh and blood," but also "with wicked spirits in high positions," and the question arises, "Who is sufficient for these things?" The reply is that none is sufficient; without the aid of the Redeemer His church would be quite overcome and vanquished by evil.

Likewise, without the Redeemer's aid through His Kingdom, without the binding of Satan, without our Lord's releasing of the world from the bondage of sin and death, there would be no hope of the world's recovery from its present bondage. But with the Apostle we exclaim, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"—Romans 8:31.

Through Mediums and Obsessions.

Satan's original plan of attack was to bring our race under his influence by misrepresentation—by putting darkness for light and light for darkness — for instance, the temptation under which Mother Eve fell. Satan there represented himself as Eve's friend, giving her sound advice. He represented God as having a selfish motive behind His command that our first parents should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan declared that God had told an untruth when He said that the penalty for sin would be death. Satan declared that man cannot die.

And has he not since kept up the same line of falsification? And has he not deceived the whole world upon this very subject? Do not all peoples in every land believe that when a man dies he does not die, but gets more alive — exactly Satan's lie of the first instance? How few have believed God, even amongst His people who truly love Him, and who truly desire to believe the teachings of His Word! We have all been

under a kind of “hoodoo.” “The god of this world [Satan] has blinded” our minds on this subject. We are now coming to see that death is the penalty for sin and that the resurrection is the salvation which God has promised and will provide.

Satan has had powerful allies and servants in the fallen angels, and it is through their persistence that this lie has seemingly triumphed over the Divine Word—”Dying, thou shalt die.” These fallen spirits have made various manifestations in every land for centuries, and thereby have apparently substantiated the theory that a dead man is more alive than when he was alive. Knowing that mankind would have nothing to do with them if their real personality were known they hide their personality and represent themselves as our dead friends who desire to speak with us, either directly or through mediums.

A further desire of these angels is to obsess or to get possession of a human being. Being chained or restrained from the privilege of materialization, the next most desirable thing in their estimation is to gain control over a human being and to use his body instead of their own. This is styled obsession, and persons so afflicted today are sent to an insane asylum where, it is estimated, they constitute at least one half of the entire number. In the days of our Lord these were not mistakenly supposed to be insane, but rightly declared to be obsessed. All remember the New Testament account that our Saviour and His Apostles cast out legions of fallen spirits from humanity.

“Know Ye Not that the Saints Shall Judge Angels?”

We need not discuss this question with Bible Students, for it is too well recognized to be disputed. We suggest a topical study of this subject by all of our readers. See how many times Jesus and the Apostles cast out demons, and note the particulars. Although we still have with us spirit mediums and many obsessed, we cannot know whether the proportionate number is greater or less than in our Lord’s day. Since the world’s population today is so much larger, the same number of evil spirits (which do not increase) would show proportionately less.

But, however that may be, we may assume that some fruitage resulted from the great sermons preached to these in connection with the death and resurrection of our Lord, respecting which St. Peter tells us in our text. Additionally, St. Paul remarks, “Know ye not that the saints shall judge angels?” (1 Cor. 6:3). We do know that the holy angels need no judging, no trial, hence the Apostle must in some way refer to a trial or judgment or testing of these spirits in prison who were once disobedient, in the days of Noah. And if the judgment or testing is a part of the divine plan, it implies a hope for them, and in conjunction with St. Peter’s statement in our text it gives the reasonable inference that the preaching which Jesus did to them was not wholly, in vain.

How Jesus Preached in Death.

Here arises another question: If Jesus was really dead, as the Scriptures declare, if “He poured out His soul unto death,” and “made His soul an offering for sin,” and He was not raised from the dead until the third day after His crucifixion, how could He in the meantime preach to spirits in prison, or to anybody else? We reply that He could preach in the same way that the Apostle refers to in respect of Abel, saying, “He, being dead, yet speaketh.” (Heb. 11:4); and again, in the same way that the blood of Abel is said to have cried to God—figuratively. Of one thing we are sure, namely, that Jesus gave no oral address while He was dead. He preached in the way we sometimes refer to when we say, “Actions speak louder than words.”

It was the great object lesson which the fallen angels saw that constituted to them the great sermon that gave them a ground for hope. On several occasions the fallen spirits, when commanded to come out of human beings, declared that they knew Jesus. In the long ago they had known him, when, as the Only

Begotten of the Father. and His representative, He had created them and all things that are made, and was also the mouthpiece for all divine orders and regulations.

The fallen angels realized[^] that he had come into the world to be its Redeemer; they perceived the great stoop that He had made from His lofty position on the heavenly plane to the servant position on the human plane. They admired His loyalty and faithfulness to God, but doubtless believed Him to be foolish; they never expected Him to arise from the dead. But when they perceived His resurrection on the third day to glory, honor and immortality, “far above angels, principalities and powers and every name that is named,” His sermon to them was complete, namely, that “the wages of sin is death,” but that “the gift of God is eternal life.” (Rom. 6:23.) And as they realized thus the power of God and the love of God for His human creatures, the Apostle’s words imply that this constituted to them a message of hope. Perhaps if they would show full contrition God eventually would have mercy upon them, even as He had had mercy and had provided for humanity.

The lesson is one for all. God’s power is infinite, so is His love, His mercy, His goodness. Nevertheless, every wilful sin will have its punishment, a just recompense of reward, and only the willing and obedient shall have the divine favor and everlasting life. Let each apply the lesson to himself.

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Friends in Melbourne desiring to attend the Bible Class, please note that the meeting place is now on the ground floor at:

Masonic Hall, 254 Swan Street (Near Church Street), Richmond. Sunday gatherings from 3 p.m.

Two Parable Booklets

“Parables of the Kingdom,” is the title of a booklet recently produced by our English brethren. It contains a short explanation of six of our Lord’s parables, as follows:— “The Wheat and the Tares,” “The Great Supper,” “The Ten Virgins,” “The Pearl of Great Price,” “The Rich Man in Hell,” and “The Sheep and Goats.” Containing 29 pages it will be found a helpful little book for the brethren, or for passing on.

“Some of the Parables” is well known to most of our readers. Containing 90 pages in explanation of a number of our Lord’s parables and an article on “What Shall be the Sign of Thy Presence and of the End of the World?” it is a most useful booklet on these subjects.

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Our Lord's Return.

This article on the manner of Christ's return is presented in continuance of this subject from last month's issue, and should prove equally as helpful and refreshing to all.

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

For instance, our Lord said, "Behold, I come as a thief;" and, "As it was in the days of Noah, -so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man (the days, of his presence): They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage," "and knew not until the flood came." "And when Jesus was questioned of the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation" (marginal reading, "not with outward show").—Rev. 16:15; Luke 17:26, 27, 20; Matt. 24:38, 39.

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

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

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

Christians generally make no effort to harmonize these statements, and therefore their ideas are one-sided and incorrect. The last group of statements is just as positive as the first, and apparently teaches the very reverse of a quiet, unobserved, thief-like manner in the Lord's coming and presence. In addition to these statements, we are referred to two other illustrations of the manner of His coming, viz.: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen Him go into

heaven,” and “As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” (Acts 1:11; Matt. 24:27.)*

(* An article on these two texts appeared in last month’s ‘Peoples Paper,’ extra copies of which are available.)

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

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

Thus Paul, John and Daniel evidently refer to the same time, the time of our Lord’s appearing, and the establishment of His kingdom in the midst of a great time of trouble, and to the events preceding and introducing it. The same result is shown by each writer to follow the standing up of Michael, the voices and the trumpet: namely, trouble and wrath upon the nations and the resurrection of the dead. Next, mark the figure used:— A SHOUT.”—The Greek word here translated “shout” is *keleusma*, which signifies a shout of encouragement. A shout implies a public message designed for the ears, not of a few, but of a mixed multitude. It is generally designed either to alarm and terrify or to assist and encourage. Or it may have the one effect upon one class, and the reverse effect upon another, according to circumstances and conditions.

The aspect of affairs in the world for the past fifty years very strikingly corresponds with this symbol, in the outbursts of world-wide encouragement for all men to wake up to a sense of their rights and privileges as men, and to consider their mutual relationships, the principles upon which they are based and the ends which they should accomplish. Where on the face of the earth is the civilized nation that has not heard the shout, and is not influenced by it! The entire civilized world has, in the past forty or fifty years, been studying political economy, civil rights and social liberties as never before in the annals of history; and men are encouraging each other, and being encouraged, as never before, to probe these subjects to the very foundation. The shout of encouragement started by the increase of knowledge among men has already encircled the earth, and under its influence men are banding themselves together, encouraged and

assisted by men of brain and genius, to contend and strive for both real and . fancied rights and liberties; and as their organizations increase and multiply, the shout grows louder and longer, and will by and by result as foretold, in the great time of trouble and tumult of angry nations. This result is graphically described by the Prophet—"The noise of a multitude in the mountains (kingdoms) like as a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of battle."—Isa. 13:4.

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

The same thought is differently expressed by Daniel, when he says, Then shall Michael, the great Prince, "stand up." To stand up signifies to assume authority, to give commands. See "ariseth," Isa. 2:19, 21. Another illustration of this symbol is from David, who says of Christ prophetically, "He uttered His voice; the earth melted." The great time of trouble will be precipitated, and the earth (organized society) will melt, or disintegrate, under the change of administration going into effect when the new King utters His voice of command. At His command, systems of error, civil, social and religious, must go down, however old or firmly entrenched and fortified they may be. The sword out of His mouth shall cause the havoc: The truth on every subject, and in all its varied aspects, shall judge men, and, under His power and overruling, shall cause the overturning of evil and error in all their thousand forms.

"THE TRUMP OF GOD."—Many seem thoughtlessly to entertain the idea that this trumpet will be a literal sound on the air. But this will be seen to be an unreasonable expectation, when it is noticed that Paul here refers to what the Revelator designates "The Seventh Trumpet," the "Last Trump," in a series of symbolic trumpets. (Rev. 11:15; 1 Cor. 15:52.) The proof that these references are to the same trumpet is found in the record of the events connected with each. Paul mentions the resurrection, and the establishment of the Lord's Kingdom, as connected with "the trump of

God," and the Revelator mentions the same with even greater minuteness. The propriety of calling the "seventh," or "last trump," the "trump of God," is evident, too, when we remember that the events mentioned under the preceding six trumpets of Revelation refer to humanity's doings, while the seventh refers specially to the Lord's work, and covers the "Day of the Lord." Since the six preceding trumpets were symbols—and this is generally admitted by commentators and students who make any claim as expositors of Revelation—it would be a violation of reason and common sense to expect the seventh, the last of the series, to be a literal, audible sound on the air. And not only so, but it would be out of harmony with the Lord's general methods, as well as with those statements of Scripture indicating the secrecy of His coming; for a thief never sounds a trumpet to announce his arrival.

The seven trumpets of Revelation are all symbolic, and represent seven great periods of time and their events. It would seem clear that today we are in the midst of the very events which mark the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The great voices, the increase of knowledge, the angry nations, etc., establish this as a fact. Many events are yet to transpire before this seventh or last trumpet ceases to sound; as, for instance, the rewarding of all the saints and prophets, the resurrection of all the dead, etc. In fact, it covers the entire period of the Millennial reign of Christ, as well, as indicated by the events which are to transpire under it.—Rev. 10:7; 11:15, 18.

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

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

The recognition of the harvest work in actual process is proof of the Lord’s presence, since He declared that He would be the chief reaper and director of the entire work, and that this would be His first work.—“Behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. . . And He That sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.”—“In the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, gather” etc. (Rev. 15:14, 16; Matt. 13:30.) The various features of the harvest work will be accomplished gradually, but all of its days are “days of the Son of Man”—days of our Lord’s presence and power—recognized in the end by all, but at first only by the class specified by the Apostle—“Ye, brethren—not in darkness.”

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

Expressed literally, we understand this to signify that our Lord’s presence will be revealed or manifested to the world from His position of spiritual control (“heaven”), in the wrath and punishment then visited upon evil and evil-doers. It will be consuming wrath, as indicated by the symbol, fire, and will leave neither root nor branch of evil systems, error, oppression, or wilful sinners; and all the proud, and ‘all evil-doers, shall be burned up as stubble. In its beginning—in this “harvest” period—this fire will burn very fiercely, consuming pride and evil, now of such rank growth. Happy those who will surrender their pride and evil to be destroyed, that they themselves be not destroyed also (in the “second death”), as some resisters will evidently be. It is of this time that we read, “Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” —Mal. 4:1.

The “mighty angels,” messengers, or agents of His power are various, and may properly be understood as

applying to and including all the various agencies, animate and inanimate, which shall be used by our Lord in the overthrow of the evil systems of the present, and in the chastisement of evil-doers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Correspondence.

Victoria.

Frank and Ernest, Dear Sirs.—I am very interested in your broadcasts on Sunday mornings from GL. You state the facts very clearly and helpfully. May our Heavenly Father bless your service to humanity in making clear His mind and purpose. Could you kindly send me your book on "God's Plan" and the three on the present series, "God the Father," "The Son," and "Holy Spirit." If there is any cost inform me and I will forward it to you.

I believe the only redemption of the world is in the coming of our King. Man has ruined the world; God will make it right. May God bless you both in His great service. Yours faithfully.

Frank and Ernest. Dear Sirs,—I enjoyed listening to you over the air to-day. I would be pleased if you would post me a copy of to-day's programme and a copy of any further programmes you put over the air. I failed to get your address properly, so am asking Geelong Radio Station to forward you this. When I get your address I will be pleased to forward whatever is necessary for the above mentioned. Yours sincerely.

Dear Frank and Ernest,—Thank you very much for sending me the "Peoples Paper" each month since I wrote to you and please forgive me not writing sooner. I haven't been at all well. Could you send me the "Peoples Paper" each month and I'll enclose postal note for same. Still enjoying your Sunday morning talks. Thanking you and wishing you well in your good work. Yours sincerely.

Frank and Ernest, Bible Institute. Dear Sirs,—I would like to say how educational and helpful I find your talks of a Sunday from 3GL, and am accepting your invitation to apply for last Sunday's talk, and the chart of God's plan.

The average man seems to find portions of the Scriptures confusing, and it is very nice to have matters clearly explained, as your session does. I wonder if you could put me on the track of a book of Bible Stories suitable to read to a youngster going to kinder-classes, as it is fairly hard to make stories up suitable for such small folk. Wishing you every success in your mission, and thanking you in anticipation. Sincerely yours.

Berean Bible Institute. Dear Sir,—Enclosed please find postal note for another twelve months' subscription to your "Peoples Paper," which I should have sent on before. I would also like the following booklets, if you have them to spare—"The Plan of God" and "God's Promises."

If possible could you send along the booklets you mention on the air each Sunday with my "Peoples Paper." We never miss hearing your Sunday morning talk. Thanking you and wishing you well in your good work. I remain, yours sincerely.

South Australia.

Frank and Ernest. Dear Friends,—Once again I am writing a few words to you and thank you for the copy of "Foregleams of the Golden 'Age'" which you so kindly forwarded to me in answer to my last letter. It is a beautiful book and blessed are they that can understand and grasp all that its messages contain.

I am still unable to get the full meaning of some of the passages not only in "Foregleams," but other books as well. Nevertheless, I do try hard to enlighten myself by keeping on reading, and trust in the Lord to help me. . . . My son and I listen regularly to your Sunday broadcasts through 5AD and do appreciate your endeavours in trying to help us and others by explaining the Bible. We would also like to thank you for your very nice letter to us, also copies of dialogues and the words of the hymn "Fight the Good Fight," which I requested.

We have since received the "People's Paper," and we will take advantage of your offer to send copies of the dialogues when you send the "Peoples Paper." We would like the last three talks from to-day. . . . What we know is that every talk or book of the "Berean" is quoted in the Scriptures, and is only put forth in a more enlightening way for us to understand. Enclosed please find postal note for 4/-. Well, dear friends, I will close with best Christian wishes and regards. Yours sincerely.

Dear Frank and Ernest.—Would you kindly send me copies of your wonderful explanations of the Bible, at least beginning of the Trinity. Thanking you in anticipation, and may your good work continue for all time. Yours respectfully.

To Frank and Ernest. Dear Sirs,—I am a very interested listener to your talks Sunday mornings over 5PI. I should be very glad if you will forward me the booklet "The Plan of God," also your talk for the last two Sunday mornings. Yours faithfully.

To Frank and Ernest, Dear Christian Friends,—A brief line to thank you for the usual monthly "Peoples Paper" with Dialogues enclosed, also good letter following.

I am pleased to say that I am privileged each Sunday morning to enjoy with the same usual enthusiasm your continued discussions. The present series on The Trinity is very helpful; it's a subject (I think) which has been, and still is, much misunderstood.

It's very refreshing to note, per "Correspondence column" the very keen spiritual interest aroused per medium of your good radio efforts, and we pray God to continue His blessing upon the good work of "Frank and Ernest" and the brethren of the Berean Bible Institute. Please accept the small enclosure to add to the General Funds. With Christian regards. Yours sincerely.

Berean Bible Institute. Dear Sirs,—Thank you for your card. A few months ago I lost my son in the R.A.F. He came down over the Mediterranean. Now, my husband, who went right through the last war and joined up at the beginning of this.

I have received hundreds of cards and wires, but no clergyman came to see me in either case, and nearly all my friends assure me that when one is dead it is the end. If that is so, what is the good of sacrifice and love and striving. Life itself would be empty indeed. I should be grateful for your literature and thank you in anticipation. Yours sincerely.

New South Wales

Frank and Ernest. Dear Sirs,—Please forward the following booklets—”Good News” and “God’s Plan.” Perhaps I have not the names quite right, as I have only heard a few of your talks, but find same very interesting indeed. I would be glad to receive any other booklets of early discussions. Thanking you. Yours truly.

Tasmania.

Frank and Ernest. Dear Sirs,—I have received the parcel of dialogues and booklets safely and wish to thank you for same. I am enclosing stamps to the value of 5/- and would like the booklets, “Where are the Dead?” “A

New Dictator,” “The Greatest of These is Love,” “Times of Refreshing,” “Some of the Parables,” “Parables of the Kingdom,” “Christ’s Return,” “Hell, Death, Spiritism,” “God and Reason ‘Beyond the Grave.” Also the pamphlet “An Open Letter to a Seventh Day Adventist,” and the dialogue “What is the Soul?” I find your dialogues and other booklets very interesting, and intend passing them on to others.

I will be sending for more books later: keep balance over the price of booklets as a small donation towards the cost of postage, etc. Yours sincerely.

Western Australia.

Frank and Ernest. Dear Christian Friends,—Many thanks for your kind Christian letter received a short time ago, also for the booklets under separate cover. I have received also three copies of “Peoples Paper” which I have enjoyed and hope to take regularly directly.

To-night I listened in to your dialogue; you asked if people wish them to be continued. Well, I most certainly hope you will continue them. They are so helpful in that they reveal God’s plan so plainly. I should like to have to-night’s dialogue and any others you may have on hand, also “Good News.” I can then pass them along. . . . I am enclosing a small subscription to help with the broadcasts. I remain, yours very sincerely.

Messrs. Frank and Ernest. Dear Sirs and Brothers, Would you please send me a copy of the little booklet “Good News,” I think you called it. I am enclosing a guinea towards the expenses; it would be a pity to discontinue the discussions, they are interesting and instructive, and people are gradually beginning to know of them. Yours sincerely.

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