Hidden Treasures: from the Storehouse of God

"I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places."
—Isaiah 45:3

THIS ISSUE OF *THE DAWN* magazine begins another new year, and will introduce a new series of articles appearing under the caption "Treasures of the Truth." The Prophet Isaiah, writing long ago, points to these hidden 'treasures of darkness' that were purposely kept secret by our Heavenly Father until the due time for their fulfillment. These riches were concealed from the worldly-wise for many centuries, but have now been unsealed and made known to God's people during the time that marks our Lord Jesus' return and the end of this present Gospel Age.

These articles will discuss some of the features of God's marvelous plan of redemption and ultimate reconciliation for the poor groaning world of mankind. The world continues to wait for the completion

of the body of Christ, and the eventual accomplishment of God's design as encompassed in those long-hidden riches of Truth and hope.—Rom. 8:19,22,23

We praise our loving Heavenly Father that we are now living during the harvest period of this Gospel Age, and the time for these hidden riches of Truth to be revealed by our Lord Jesus during his Second Presence as foretold by the prophets of God.

DANIEL'S PROPHECY

Another one of God's faithful prophets of old was directly informed that the visions and truths which he saw and wrote about were not to be understood by him during his lifetime, but were to be sealed up and kept secret until the end of the age at which time they would be made known. We read, "Thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." (Dan. 12:4) The prophet then expresses his anxiety by acknowledging, "I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?" (vs. 8) The Heavenly Father then made clear his will and instructions to his servant. "He said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." (vs. 9) We believe that we are now living in this 'time of the end' which is evidence of the time when these prophecies would be fulfilled.

THE LAODICEAN CHURCH

Many centuries later, the revelator recorded God's final message to his people in the marvelous visions that were given to him, some of which related to the important events that would take place at the end of

the Gospel Age. In God's messages to the seven churches of Asia, we are particularly interested in the church at Laodicea because it is the last one of the seven, and provides a prophetic forecast that would be associated with the prophecies foretelling the time of the end of which Daniel wrote, with the announcement that they would be closed up and sealed until the fulfilling of that prophetic time.

The message to the Laodicean church points to the return of our Lord Jesus, and to the specific time that the promised treasures of Truth would be unlocked and made known to the Lord's people, who are elsewhere described as the 'watchers.' The unlocking and opening of God's sealed storehouse of Truth, would thus coincide with the promised return, and invisible Second Presence, of our Lord Jesus, which was also to occur during the same time period at the end of the age.

Students of the Bible note with particular interest God's message in connection with the seventh church at Laodicea that the revelator recorded. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:20) Those who were on hand at that time, and alert to what God's Word said, and watching the events as foretold, quickly recognized and appreciated the deeper meaning of this promise. It was one in which they would now share the blessing to 'sup' and to be fed with the riches of hidden Truth being unlocked by our returned Lord. The fulfillment of this prophecy served as an important sign that the end of the age had indeed arrived as prophesied by Daniel many centuries earlier.

MEAT IN DUE SEASON

During Jesus' earthly ministry, nearly two thousand years earlier, he spoke of many prophecies that foretold the end of the age, and addressed this particular subject as recorded by Luke in his Gospel. The Master's teachings provide another important connection with the events that were prophesied to take place at the end of the age, and the time when he would return. He said, "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."—Luke 12: 37

Jesus' words thus confirm the revelator's message, that at the time of his return he would knock symbolically at the door of the watchers' hearts before gaining entry. Those who opened the door of their hearts and welcomed him in were promised to be richly blessed thereby with spiritual food, as represented by the Lord's sitting down to serve 'meat' to his people.

Our Lord's reference here is to those who would be on hand, alert and watching, at the time of his foretold return. Those who were so doing would be served the 'meat in due season' as promised. This meat is the spiritual food that has been such a vital and special blessing to the Lord's people—the watchers—during the closing years of this present Gospel Age. It identifies one of the purposes of the Master's return and his intention to sup with the true children of God as foretold by the revelator.

THE WATCHERS

There is special admonition for God's people to be alert and to watch the signs of the times, and the

prophetic events that are about to take place around them. Jesus also instructs us, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." (Mark 13:32-37) The emphasis to the watchers, therefore, is to be alert.

On another occasion, Jesus cautioned, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."—Luke 21:34-36

The importance of understanding and appreciating the pure doctrines of the hidden treasures is also addressed by our Lord Jesus, when he said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17) The truth of God's Word has a powerful sanctifying influence, and these scripturally taught riches, that gladden our hearts, constitute the basis of our faith, and are of the utmost importance to us in our Christian walk during the present time.

GOD GIVETH WISDOM

There are many wonderful promises in God's Word that have been written for those who desire to know and serve him. The true child of God who possesses a pure heart, and is humble, teachable, and seeking for understanding of spiritual matters, is promised to be led by God's Spirit into all Truth.

In this connection, we note the following promise, "Thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God." (Prov. 2:2-5) These words of Solomon contain much wisdom and instruction for us to consider.

An interest in seeking knowledge concerning the purposes of God took on a deeper and more significant meaning as the end of the Gospel Age drew ever closer. Devoted Christian people searched the Scriptures more diligently to seek an understanding of prophecies that concerned the end of the age, and the invisible return of our Lord. There began to be watchers on hand who earnestly looked forward to this grand time.

HIDDEN TREASURES REVEALED

Among those of the 'watchers' who were on hand to receive the unlocked treasures of hidden Truth during the mid 1870's was Charles T. Russell. He became the central, most prominent, and influential figure in connection with the revealing of 'present truth.' He was totally dedicated to the work, and was instrumental in sending forth the harvest

message of Truth to the household of faith. Together with others of like precious faith who labored in the Lord's vineyard, the Truth was sent out to those who had an ear to receive and respond to it.

Some of the important doctrinal subjects and time prophecies that were under discussion among the brethren during those early years of the Truth movement, included the scriptural teachings concerning the Ransom, Restitution, and the Second Presence of our Lord. In 1878, Pastor Russell wrote and published a pamphlet concerning the Second Presence, "The Object and Manner of the Lord's Return." This firmly established his understanding on the subject, and it was widely accepted by many thoughtful Christian people at that time.

FOOD FOR THINKING CHRISTIANS

A few years later, in 1881, the pastor wrote "Food for Thinking Christians," and it is with particular interest that we note the title that he chose for this very important book. The title clearly related to the scriptural references that have been previously cited in connection with the fulfillment of these very important time prophecies. It pointed directly to the meat in due season which our returned and spiritually present Lord promised to serve his people at that time. The Master's desire was to sup with the watchers, and to share rich spiritual food with them. This timely book represented a very early study of these particular scriptures that ultimately served to unlock some of the hidden treasures of Truth, and make them available to others at the end of this age.

It is also of interest to note the special efforts that were put forward to present the Truth in the

best possible manner. As a suggestion to this, we refer to the "Author's Foreword" to *Volume I, Studies in the Scriptures*. His contemplation provides us an important perspective in which he explains the gradual development in the unlocking of the Truth message contained in the present volume, and to make it as understandable and appealing as possible to others.

Quoting from page 1 of the Foreword, he explains, "Above five years preceding the first publication of this Volume, we had substantially the same matter in print under another name and differently presented. That book was entitled 'Food for Thinking Christians.' Its style was different in that it first of all attacked the error—demolished it—and then in its place, erected the fabric of Truth. We finally learned that this was not the best way—that some became alarmed as they saw their errors falling, and failed to read far enough to get a glimpse of the beautiful structure of the Truth in place of the demolished errors."

In an effort to make still further improvements in presenting the message of Truth in "Food for Thinking Christians," we again quote the following from page 3 of the Foreword to Volume I. Here the author says, "In the earliest editions of this Volume, the title, 'Millennial Dawn,' was used; but we found that some were deceived thereby into thinking it a novel. In order that none might be deceived, and that none might purchase under such deception, we later adopted the present serial title, 'Studies in the Scriptures,' which nobody can misunderstand."

The Author's Foreword, together with his Forewords to the other six Volumes of *Studies in the*

Scriptures, and his last articles which have been published in the Reprints, proved to be his final message to the household of faith. They provide an important record in the progression and final presentation of what eventually became "The Divine Plan of the Ages" or *Volume 1, Studies in the Scriptures*, which was first published under that title in 1886. Since that time, millions of copies of this book, in many languages, continue to be a source of blessing and encouragement concerning the understanding of the Divine plan and purposes of God.

THE EXPANDING TRUTH MOVEMENT

Later, in the same year 1881, Russell also published *Tabernacle Shadows of the Better Sacrifices* with the subheading "A Helping Hand for the Royal Priesthood." This book served as an important examination of the Levitical types and shadows, and how they relate to our Lord Jesus and the household of faith.

Numerous books, pamphlets, and other Truth literature has appeared over time which was printed and distributed by volunteer brethren who willingly gave their time to serve the newly unsealed Truth to those who were yearning to receive the message. Also, many brethren were engaged in speaking appointments at conventions, and pilgrim activities.

In due course of time, five other volumes were written making a total of six. *Volume 2, The Time is at Hand* in 1889; *Volume 3, Thy Kingdom Come* in 1891; *Volume 4, The Day of Vengeance* in 1897; *Volume 5, The Atonement Between God and Man* in 1899; and *Volume 6, The New Creation* in 1904. We believe that these 'helping hands' for Bible students

have opened the Scriptures for the Lord's people throughout the world in many languages.

The momentum of the harvest message that was well received during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and the beginning of the twentieth century, increased rapidly. The unsealed treasures of Truth found their way into the hearts of countless numbers of honest-hearted Christians for the very first time. A flurry of truth-related activity resulted far and wide that can hardly be compared with any other time period throughout the entire length of the Gospel Age except, perhaps, at the beginning of the age nearly two thousand years earlier, when our Lord Jesus together with his apostles and other disciples were engaged in spreading forth the Truth to those of the Early Church.

Before publishing his own magazine, Russell worked as assistant editor together with N. H. Barbour of Rochester, N.Y., who edited a Truth magazine called *Herald of the Morning*. In 1877, he and Barbour also published a book entitled *The Three Worlds and Plan of Redemption*. This book brought together some of his beliefs in connection with the subjects of ransom and restitution, along with Barbour's thoughts on chronology and time prophecy.

They did not always come to the same conclusions, however, regarding the teaching on certain scriptures, and controversy inevitably arose between the two. This became more apparent when Barbour began inserting his 'corrections' on various issues of truth as editorial comments wherever he disagreed with Russell's articles. They thus ended their partnership in 1879, and Russell began preparation to publish his own Truth magazine. *(Continued on page 35)*

(Continued from page 31) The first monthly edition of his own magazine was published in July 1879. It was printed in Pittsburgh, PA, and Russell as editor, together with five others, became its regular contributors. It was the first time that a Truth magazine had been devoted to announcing the return and Second Presence of our Lord Jesus, and it pointed to the subsequent unlocking of long hidden treasures of Truth to the watchers at the end of the Gospel Age.

In harmony with the fulfilling of time prophecies, the editor reasoned that the time had arrived to send forth the unlocked message of Truth. He pointed out that the last days of the Gospel Age were at hand, and that the dawning of a new age was drawing near. He made clear his intention to present the Truth as given in the Word of God to those who had an ear to hear what the spirit was revealing to the people of God. He also explained that the Truth message was in bondage to no man, no party, and to no creed but the Bible, and that the meat in due season was being proclaimed to the household of faith in the bonds of love and sympathy to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in truth and sincerity.

THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS

The present day household of faith may be richly blessed in the knowledge that we are now living during the closing years of the harvest period, and the inevitable end of this present Gospel Age. This is with the assurance that our Lord Jesus has been spiritually present with his people since the foretold time for his return. He has been present to unlock the true meaning of the precious treasures that are contained in the Heavenly Father's storehouse of

Truth and that were kept hidden therein for many generations.

This spiritual food that has been made available to the household of faith, for now well over a cen-tury, is the promised "meat" in due season of which Jesus spoke (Luke 12:37; Rev. 3:20), and is now given freely to his people. This nourishment has pro-vided the consecrated child of God with a deeper and fuller understanding concerning God's message of Truth that was taught by our Lord Jesus and his apostles. Our attention has thus been directed to the admonition of Jude where we read, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—Jude 3

We have received a very rich legacy of truth from the watchers who preceded us and handed down to our generation those truths that were revealed to the household of faith. As a result of their labors of love, many have since consecrated their lives to God in sacrifice and devotion to him, marking the sign that our Lord is now spiritually present with his people and dispensing the hidden treasures of Truth from God's storehouse. ■