



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

This is a bi-monthly magazine for the propagation of the Word of God and thus the encouragement and edification of the people of God.

Advisory Editor : A. M. S. Gooding

Editor: B. Currie

Correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to:

The Editor, 49 Glenburn Road, Dunmurry, N. Ireland, BT17 9AN.
Telephone (01232) 621343.

Secretary/Treasurer : William Neill, 109 Lurgan Road,
Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.
Telephone (018206) 24238.

Committee : Tom Armstrong, Thomas Beggs, Ronnie Johnston,
James McKeown, James Moore, Roy Reynolds.

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John Glenville, 16 Trelawney Road, Saltash, Cornwall, PL12 4DD.
Telephone (01752) 846889.

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Editor's Message

As we enter a New Year we will often hear the greeting, 'Happy New Year'. There are many who utter this who do not know the secret of having a 'Happy New Year'. It is wonderful that we who belong to Christ are truly happy. The book of Psalms, which often tells us of trials and difficulties, is also the song book of Israel and thus lets us know of blessedness or true happiness. It is like Paul and Silas who, in the midst of painful trial in prison, 'prayed, and sang praises unto God', Acts 16.25. This all stems from unquestioning faith in God and His ways.

It commences with **FAITH and SALVATION** — Ps. 32.1,2, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity'.

There can be no realisation of true joy and happiness without this experience of having our sins forgiven. It would be a good and wholesome question for every reader to ask, 'Have I personally experienced this great blessing'?

It continues with **FAITH and COMMUNION** — Ps. 65.4, 'Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple'.

Satisfaction is obtained by approaching and dwelling. Not following afar off, nor a spasmodic visit. How much we miss by not being diligent and consistent in our lives with God. The satisfaction is with 'Thy house'. This introduces the collective side of communion. All too often His house, the local assembly (1 Tim. 3.15), is attended infrequently. The meetings for prayer, ministry and the blessedness of the Lord's supper are neglected and eventually abandoned. It is no wonder that in such a situation there is no spiritual joy and satisfaction.

Such communion is maintained by **FAITH and SEPARATION** — Ps. 1.1, 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful'.

In our day, teaching on separation is looked upon as old fashioned and outdated. There is an idea abroad that we ought to be like the unsaved in order to win them. However, a Christian life ought to be a condemnation, not a comfort, to the world. Strength is always found in separation. Samson lost his strength when he mingled with the Philistines. The Word still teaches separation religiously, commercially, socially, yea in every way. It runs through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The word to Abram in Gen. 12.1 was, 'Get thee out'; to us it is, 'come out from among them, and be ye separate', (2 Cor. 6.17) and in the future will be, 'Come out of her, my people', Rev. 18.4.

Many tell us that such a life is very difficult and hard. What is the answer?

FAITH and SIMPLICITY — Ps. 40.4, 'Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust . . .'

We sing 'Simply trusting every day;
Trusting through a stormy way;
Even when my faith is small
— Trusting Jesus, that is all.

We have begun with faith and conclude by faith. We remember it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'.

What about those around? The answer is the same, **FAITH and SOCIETY** — Ps.33.12, ‘Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; . . .’

The heartaches and misery of society generally can be traced to the fact that God and His principles have been abandoned. Sin is glamorised and legalised. The young are seduced into thinking there is happiness in freedom of expression. It leads to a life of dissipation, dissatisfaction and in the end an eternity of discomfort. In the midst of an apostate society we have the answer. Let us have a greater zeal in evangelism and that it can be said of us, ‘from you sounded out the word of the Lord’, 1Thess.1.8

If we seek to practice the principles outlined, we know we will have a ‘Happy New Year’, and it is this we wish all our readers.

COMMITTEE NOTES

As we contemplate another year, we do so with trepidation and yet anticipation. Another year — how glibly we use those words, largely unconscious of their import; another year with its potential, its problems, its pitfalls, its rapid passing and perhaps the year of His return.

‘Another year, then let us all be watchful;
With loins girt up and with our staff in hand;
This year down here amid earth's tribulation,
The next, perhaps with Him in Glory Land.’

“**MARANATHA**” — that ancient word so frequently used by disciples of the first century, must again become our watchword, “for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh”. Jms.5.8.

Problems are developing which are baffling the politicians, there is political instability in many countries, turbulence in the money markets globally and the social infrastructure is crumbling, leaving many with a sense of unease and foreboding, but we who are saved, feel that God may pre-empt their plans with an event of such magnitude and on such a scale as to eclipse their puny schemes — “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout”, 1Thess.4.16.

As we reflect upon the year past, we are bound to give thanks to a faithful and unchanging God for His gracious help experienced. We are deeply encouraged by all who, through practical fellowship, have supported the publication. We thank all who help in its distribution and are grateful to all who have expressed their appreciation of the magazine. We appreciate most sincerely the contributions of all who submit articles and trust that the original aim of the magazine, the edification of the Lord's people and the strengthening of assembly testimony, is being achieved.

We are particularly grateful to our Editor for his careful and diligent work, the Secretary and his wife for their meticulous and unremitting labours, the Accountant for his valued services and our brother John Glenville for all his help.

We continue to earnestly request your unceasing prayers that through the written ministry the Lord will be pleased to bless His people and through the inclusion of the Gospel article, souls will be saved.

BEHOLD YOUR KING

(Meditations in Matthew)

by Jim Flanigan (Belfast)

12. The Sermon on the Mount (concluded) (Ch.7)

Our Lord concludes the Sermon on the Mount with a parable. Two men are building. One is a wise builder who makes sure of a rock foundation. When the rains descend and the floods rise and the winds blow, his house withstands the storm. It is founded upon rock. The other man is foolish. He builds on sand. His house may have looked equally well as the other. It may even have gone up more quickly and perhaps it may not have been so costly. But when the winds and rains came and the storm beat upon that house, it fell, and great was the fall of it. So, says the Lord Jesus, everyone who hears these sayings of Mine and obeys them, is like the man who builds upon rock. Those who hear and do not obey, are like the man who builds upon sand. Men are divided, wise and foolish, according to their attitude to Him and His teaching. How early in His ministry does the Saviour emphasise the importance of obedience to His word. It is wise to obey. It is foolish to disobey. This consideration ought to help us as we look at the concluding exhortations in His discourse on the mount.

We are exhorted that we should not judge where we ought not. We know, sadly, that in the assembly judgment is sometimes necessary. Paul rebukes the Corinthians for failing to judge when they ought to have judged. However, the same Corinthians were also failing in that they were judging the apostle himself when they ought not to have been judging. Here our Lord is warning against that needless carping criticism of others which can so often be associated with hypocrisy. "Search others for their virtues, thyself for thy vices", someone has said. How often do we so readily detect the mote in a brothers's eye and fail to notice the beam in our own eye. What troubles we might be spared if we would judge ourselves more ruthlessly and others more sparingly.

We must zealously and jealously guard our character and our testimony. It is holy and precious and we must not give it to be devoured by dogs or trampled by swine. We must so live as to give no occasion for just criticism by the world. Dogs and swine are unclean. Our characters are precious as pearls. Live in holiness. Do not be careless in your living. It is indeed like casting your pearls before swine to give the world opportunity to accuse you of wrong doing. There will, inevitably, be accusations which are unfair and unfounded. It was so even with the Saviour and with His apostles. But we must not give opportunity for a criticism and blame which is justly deserved of our wrong doing.

Through it all we must continue in simple and sincere believing prayer. Ask, seek, and knock, says the Saviour. To simple faith there will be a divine response. He will give us whatever is for our good. If we seek in His will we shall find, and He will gladly open when we knock. It gives the Father pleasure to have the trust of His children. If earthly fathers know how to give good things to their children,

how much more our Father in heaven. He will never give stones and serpents when we ask for fish and bread.

In this final section of the Sermon on the Mount there are two gates, two ways, two destinies, two trees, and two builders. Our Lord is emphasising that there is a choice to be made and that men are divided. Three times in John's Gospel we read that there was a division among the people because of Him. Men are responsible and our attitude to His Person, His word, and His work, will determine our destiny.

There is a strait gate and a narrow way of discipleship. It is not a popular way and they are relatively few that find it, but it leads to life. The other gate is wide and the road broad. It is a crowded road, with much noise and bustle and much to attract. It has ever been the way of the majority, searching for pleasures and the satisfying of the flesh. But it ends in death and destruction.

Then there are ever present false teachers, dressed as sheep but preying on the unsuspecting like ravening wolves. Their evil intent is to lure souls to the wide gate and the broad way. How shall we know such men? If they appear in sheep's clothing how shall we recognise them for what they really are? "Ye shall know them by their fruits", says the Lord Jesus. Observe what they are producing by their teaching. Do men gather a bunch of grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? There are good trees producing good fruit and there are worthless trees producing the bad. By this principle we can discern the worth of the true teacher and the others are destined for ruin.

Does our Lord here envisage the growth of a great Christendom where such false teachers are at home? They say, "Lord, Lord". They profess His name and purport to be His servants ministering in His name. But how many there are in the pulpits of Christendom to whom He will eventually say, "I never knew you; depart from Me". How many there are who profess His name but deny His glories. They deny His deity. They query His virgin birth. They decry His unique Manhood. They doubt His miracles. They refuse His sacrifice. They disbelieve His bodily resurrection, and His ascension and His coming again. False prophets indeed, worthless trees, and bad fruits from their pernicious teaching.

So does the Lord Jesus conclude His discourse on the mount with the parable of the two builders. His word is of paramount importance. The storm will eventually and inevitably come. It is well to be founded securely upon the rock of His word. His word has authority and assurance. Is it any wonder that the listening crowds were astonished? They had never ever heard such authoritative teaching from the scribes. The scribes were not men of conviction. They lived in the shadow of fellow-scribes and Rabbis. They were conversant with the opinions of Rabbis past and present and would quote these rather than give their own understanding of a matter. With the Saviour it was not so. He taught with conviction and with authority and the people had never heard it quite like this before.

In the next chapter the Lord will descend from the mount with His disciples. His discourse has occupied them with high moral ground but now they must come down to the wretchedness below. We live in a defiled and defiling world. His word is our safeguard and our guide in the moral darkness which surrounds us, and He will now demonstrate the power with which He can keep us as we seek to live for Him.

Gates of Jerusalem, Nehemiah 3

by D. S. Parrack, England

PAPER 5

viii) *The Gate Miphkad, v31.*

Miphkad means assignment or designated/appointed place.

‘Whom can I look to and rely on to be sure that I am filling my designated role, or that I even have such a role?’ The Lord Jesus said to His recognised disciples in the most difficult circumstances “Ye have not chosen Me but I have chosen you”. But more than that, “And ordained (appointed) you to bring forth fruit and that your fruit shall remain” John 15.16. They were chosen, and chosen to accomplish a particular task. Paul, in writing to Timothy obviously had more than just a young man in mind. “No man” he says emphatically, “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” 2Tim.2,4. You, just like the disciples in John.15 were chosen. ‘Ah’, but you say, ‘I believed’. True, but remember, “He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world,” Eph.1.4.

‘So I, and all my fellow believers, have been chosen, and chosen to fulfill specific roles, but how can we get to know what those roles are?’

First of all to clear the ground, don’t be so concerned with what someone else should be doing. Think of the different approaches of Paul and Peter in this context and then decide which is the best example for you to follow.

“Peter seeing him (i.e. John) saith to Jesus, Lord and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him - what is that to thee, follow thou Me” John.21,21.22 “(Paul) trembling and astonished said — Lord what wilt Thou have me do?” Acts 9.6. It is to be hoped that the right choice is easily made.

Well, it is perhaps easy to decide on the right question to ask, but what about the answer? Is there nothing that we can do to give us some assurance in the matter? Paul says “I beseech you brethren by the mercies of God”, I base my appeal on what I have told you about the fullness of the gospel and its deserved response. “That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable (your understood and accepted) service. And be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds that ye may prove (be assured experimentally) what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” Rom.12.12. A full hearted, uninhibited commitment, is how to know what God’s will is for you. When Isaiah heard the question “Whom shall I send and who will go for us?” he did not ask, go where or for what? but responded without hesitation or conditions. “Here am I send me” Isa.6.8. God did send him too, and it was by no means an easy task for which he had volunteered. Paul himself found that to be true as shown to Ananias. “I will show him how great things he must suffer for My

Name's sake, "Acts 9.16. Nevertheless it is far better to be engaged in doing the known will of God, even if it is uncongenial to our natural taste, than to be contentedly taken up with what we really know cannot be His purpose for us. Doing God's will does not automatically preclude us from problems and persecution but, "It is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing than for evil doing" 1Pet.3,17. Remember that "to him that knoweth to do good" and that includes knowing God's will for you, "and doeth it not, to him it is sin". Jas.4.17.

We need then, as well as knowing God's will as generally revealed in the scriptures, see e.g. 1 Thess.4.3, to ascertain what His will is for us personally. We will then be able to take our assigned place in a way which will be conducive to the blessing of His people whilst making us available too for service in outreach activities to those not currently in the good of the gospel's provision.

If we feel that the heart searching brought about by our consideration of the gate Miphkad makes it necessary to change our individual and collective activities then remember "the old gate" v6.

ix) The Old Gate, v6

We must not think that this gate signifies that everything old is automatically good, or at least better than comparable things today "Say not thou, What is the cause that former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely" Prov.9.10. It seems to be natural to us to look back through rose tinted spectacles. Our schooldays are spoken of as the happiest days of our lives, but we didn't feel like that at the time. Summer holidays were all blue skies, warm sun and clean beaches, but then lots of people could not afford holidays before World War II. At the end of one of His parables, the Lord Jesus said, "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new, for he saith. The old is better" Luke 5.39.

Are we expected then to discard the old, to concentrate on new methods, new approaches, new forms of activities? Most certainly not. We are urged for instance to "Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the word of God, and considering the issue of their conversation (manner of life), imitate their faith" Heb.13.7, J.N.D. In view of v17 of the same chapter, it is seen as reasonable to assume that the leaders spoken of here have now passed on, but the example of how faith reveals itself in practice is held up to be followed. Scriptural truth does not change and we are warned, "Remove not the ancient landmark (bound) which thy fathers have set" Prov.22.28. Maintaining the balance in this context requires the spiritual ability to discern what is only tradition or the "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" Mk.7.7. The only safe way is to genuinely ask the question, "What saith the scripture?" Rom.4.3, and then to emulate the Bereans who, having "received the Word with all readiness of mind" went further "and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so," Acts 17.11.

Acting like the Bereans is not tantamount to casting doubt on what teachers, past or present, have told us. It is showing where the real source of assurance is found, in the Scriptures themselves. Jude had a consciousness of a need amongst the people to whom he was writing, what he might today call 'an excuse', but he included in his letter, "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 to contend earnestly for the faith that was once (i.e. once-for-all) delivered unto the saints” Jude 3. It is accepted that changes in methods of presentation may evolve, but that level of change is centuries old, e.g. printing, introduced some 500 years ago, has made it possible for everyone to have their personal copy of the Bible instead of being dependent on listening to readings from hand written copies of the Scriptures chained up in monasteries or church buildings. We ought not to think though that mere introduction of new means of communication will by themselves produce results unattainable otherwise. Remember that “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” 1Cor.1.21 and there is no more basic way of communicating the gospel, nor of teaching believers, than preaching the Word.

We do need though as preachers, or teachers, to be quite sure of what we actually say to our audiences. Paul, writing to an assembly with whom he enjoyed valued fellowship, see e.g. Phil.1.5-7; 4.15-16 says. “Finally my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you to me indeed is not grievous”. “I don’t find it difficult, irksome or dull to tell you things you have heard before,” or, as Peter puts it, “Though ye know them and be established in the present truth” 2Pet.1.12. And if it is not grievous to me be sure “for you it is safe” Phil.3.1. Much better to preach, and hear, truth which is well known but which, in this life at least we will probably never fully comprehend, than to tickle imaginations with some new and hitherto unheard of slant on established truth.

MEN OF GENESIS

by J. E. Todd, England

2. Enoch and His Walk

We have noted that in the book of Genesis the lives of many men of God centre around a single feature. In the case of Enoch it was his walk.

A person’s walk is a picture often used in scripture to depict their way of life. The picture being of a person walking through life with all its changing scenes.

The Commencement of Enoch’s Walk with God

The Scriptures record that it was a particular point in time when Enoch commenced his walk with God. ‘Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah’, (Gen.5.22). This could be called Enoch’s conversion, but what brought it about? It was the birth of his son Methuselah. Why should this event bring Enoch to faith in God? ‘He (Enoch) had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him’, (Heb.11.5-6). Enoch was a prophet (Jude 14). Did God reveal to him the fact that his son Methuselah would live until the year of the flood, the judgment of God against sin? Was it the revelation of a future judgment that caused Enoch to repent and believe? It is to be noticed that as Noah preached

righteousness to the people, (2Pet.2.5), such was the patience of God (1Pet.3.20) that Methuselah, who must die before the flood, lived longer than any other man. The same divine patience is displayed as we wait the second coming of the Lord. 'The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance', (2Pet.3.9).

The Continuance of Enoch's Walk with God

'Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years' (Gen.5.22). Enoch's daily walk was pleasing to God, 'Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God', (Heb.11.5). What was it about the walk of Enoch that was so pleasing to God? First, his faith, he trusted God all the remaining days of his life, 'By faith Enoch . . . he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him', (v5-6). Second, he drew near to God, he wanted an ever closer communion with God, 'For he that cometh to God must believe' (v6). Third, he sought God, he positively wanted God to be involved in his life, 'That He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him', (v6).

The New Testament exhorts the Christian to follow such an example. 'We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more' (1Thess.4.1).

The Conclusion of Enoch's Walk with God

'Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him', (Gen.5.24). 'By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him', (Heb.11.5). So close did Enoch's communion with God become that he walked right into the presence of God.

It is a remarkable fact that we have three translations into heaven in the scriptures. These are Enoch, Elijah (2Kings 2.9-12) and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Acts 1.9-11). It seems that God gave a physical and visible demonstration to each dispensation that the believer will receive eternal heavenly glory. Enoch before the flood, Elijah during the old covenant and the Lord Himself at the commencement of the new covenant. These are practical demonstrations of the truth of 1Pet.1.3-4. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you'. —to be continued (D.V.)

He who only sees difficulties is a failure.

He who sees no difficulties is a fool, but he who sees the difficulties and sees God above and over all is a victor.

W. Gaw

Assembly Testimony Bible Class

by J. Riddle (Cheshunt)

The Church and The Churches

(19) Assembly Discipline (1)

In 1Cor.1-6, Paul deals with things he had heard about the assembly, and in chps.7-10, he deals with questions put to him by the assembly. It is significant to notice that he deals first of all with matters that they had not raised. Paul's priorities evidently differed from the priorities of the Corinthians! So far as chps.1-6 are concerned, Paul first addresses the divisions amongst the believers (chps.1-4), of which he had been notified by "the house of Chloe", (1.11), and then the immorality tolerated by them (chps.5-6) which was "reported commonly", 5.1.

Our next two studies are based on 1Cor.5, and this chapter is the principle New Testament passage on the solemn subject of assembly discipline. Please have the chapter open as you read these two papers. We will attempt to analyse the chapter by asking four questions: (1) When is assembly discipline required? v1: (2) What does assembly discipline involve? v2-5: (3) Why is assembly discipline necessary? v6-8: (4) Who does assembly discipline include? v9-13.

1) When is Assembly Discipline Required? v1

Whilst we are particularly concerned with 1Cor.5, we should be aware of the various New Testament references to assembly discipline:

A) In connection with disorderly conduct. See 2Thess.3.6-15: "Now we command you, brethren, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly . . . For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies . . . and if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother". The required procedure in this case, is not excommunication, but the avoidance of fellowship, in order to make the people concerned thoroughly aware of their unacceptable and unbecoming conduct.

B) In connection with divisions amongst God's people. See Titus 3.10-11: "A man that is an heretic (from a word meaning, an opinion — leading to error), after the first and second admonition reject ('have done with'); knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself". This is the man who persists in propagating a view which results in 'gathering adherents to himself . . . and, in so doing, causes strife, faction and division in the assembly'. D. E. West (What the Bible Teaches - Titus). In such cases, after two warnings (so patience is to be exercised) the man is to be shunned and avoided, rather than excommunicated, and certainly given no opportunity to propagate his views.

C) In connection with doctrinal error. See 1Tim.1.20: "Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn (JND 'may be taught by discipline') not to blaspheme". Clearly, this was not a case of a mistaken interpretation of the scripture, or a slip of the tongue, but deliberate propagation of error. The only course of action in such circumstances is excommunication.

D) In connection with moral behaviour. See 1Cor.5 Notice

- (i) v1 which refers to immorality, and
- (ii) v11 which refers to covetousness, idolatry, railing, drunkenness and extortion.

Once again these are matters which call, solemnly, for excommunication.

- (i) v1 cites a case of immoral behaviour: "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife". (Probably, his step-mother). We should notice the words, "It is reported". This means that it was commonly known. 'It is actually reported', RV. The absence of further reference to the woman indicates that she was not in fellowship.
- (ii) v11 specifies a number of reasons for the exercise of assembly discipline. "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat". We should carefully notice the sins mentioned.
- (i) "A fornicator". When the word stands alone, it denotes immorality of all kinds. When it occurs with 'adultery', it has a more specific meaning, that is, pre-marital unchastity. See, for example, Heb.13.4, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers (JND 'fornicators') and adulterers will God judge".
- (ii) "Covetous". The word denotes a desire to have more: greedy of gain. It therefore covers all forms of gambling, together with sharp practice in business.
- (iii) "An idolater". This denotes any false system of worship together with sorcery and spiritism.
- (iv) "a railer". This refers to reviling or abuse. Not 'blasphemia' but 'loidoria'. This covers vilification, defamation of character, and false accusation.
- (v) "A drunkard". Speaks for itself. The root word means 'mulled wine'. There can be no doubt at all that Christians are far better off without any alcoholic beverages. Remember that the drink which causes the trouble is the first one.
- (vi) "An extortioner". The words covers pillage, plunder, robbery. It therefore includes the misappropriation of property or funds, and fraud.

(2) What Does Assembly Discipline Involve? v2-5.

A) It involves the need for a proper attitude Godward, v2.

Paul was obliged to say, "and ye are puffed up". (From 'phusa', meaning bellows), and continues, "and have not rather mourned that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from you". There was no concern before God over the sinful life of the assembly member in question. For "mourned" ('pentheo'), see James 4.9: "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness". See also 2Cor.12.21, "For I fear, lest, when I come, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail (R.V. 'mourn') many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness which they have committed".

It is hardly tenable to suggest that the words "puffed up" mean that the assembly was positively delighted at such misconduct. These words evidently refer to the subject in the previous section, see 4.6 and 4.18-19. We learn from this that it is possible to become so engrossed in our own party position, that we fail to see

pressing danger elsewhere. At Corinth, the saints were so involved in proclaiming their superiority over each other, that God's interests had lapsed. See Daniel 9 for a more commendable attitude: "And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel", v20.

Note the words, "that he that hath done this deed might be taken away". This implies that even if the Corinthians did not know how to deal with the evil in their midst, they should have waited upon God to intervene in the matter. We have only to recall Ananias and Sapphira in this connection. (There is a lesson for elders here: in times of perplexity, wait upon God). Paul then proceeds to shew them how they should have acted, and having done so, urges them to "put away from among yourselves that wicked person", v13. By the time the assembly reached this point in the chapter, they knew exactly what should be done. This brings us to the second requirement:

B) It involves the need for proper action manward, v3-5.

i) The parties involved

There are three parties involved in assembly discipline: "In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ". Thus

a) The Lord Jesus Christ. This emphasises His authority. The title, "the Lord Jesus Christ", occurs twice in v4. (RV omits 'Christ', although JND is a little more cautious). It is "In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ", and "With the power (dunamis) of our Lord Jesus Christ".

1Cor.5 helps us to understand Matt.18.15-20, and in particular the words, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be ('shall have been', Amplified Version) loosed in heaven". This does not mean that heaven will ratify the assembly's disciplinary or restorative action, but that the assembly implements heaven's judgment in the matter. So the assembly must be aware of the mind and will of God in these circumstances. An assembly cannot expect divine approval if it acts outside the will of God. This prompts us to say that such discipline is only to be exercised in the most dire circumstances. It is not unknown for believers to be silenced or excommunicated for the most petty reasons.

b) The gathered assembly. "When ye are gathered together . . ." R.V., 'Ye being gathered together'. (Matt.18.20 must be understood in this context). So, the whole assembly puts away — just as the whole assembly receives into fellowship. This must be clearly and fully understood. Undoubtedly the elders will take a lead on such solemn occasions, since it is their responsibility to guide the assembly. But they must not act in a clandestine, secretive way. They must carry the whole assembly with them. Should some saints in fellowship not be present when discipline is implemented, they should be duly informed.

c) The apostolic authority of Paul. "And my spirit". See v3: "For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath done this deed". Compare 2Cor.2.10, "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also". Paul was bodily absent, but present in spirit. That is, they had his apostolic authority to act in this way. Compare Col.2.5, "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ". What a difference to 1Cor.5!

In our next paper we will consider (ii) the punishment involved, and (iii) the purpose involved, together with the two outstanding questions, (3) Why is assembly discipline necessary? v6-8, and (4) Who does assembly discipline include? v9-13.

—to be continued (D.V.)

WHERE I AM

by R. Reynolds, Bleary, N. Ireland

The Lord Jesus cheered His disconsolate disciples with the thought that He and they would be together forever. "I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am there ye may be also", Jn.14.3. He was not leaving them to forget them but was going to prepare a place for them in the Father's house. In Jn.17.24 He expressed that longing to His Father, "I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am".

For that glad day He patiently waits, when "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied", Isa.53.11. Wondrous thought that He looks forward to and will enjoy the company of redeemed sinners eternally. To that very end He left the excellent glory and came to earth and languished at last upon yon lonely cross, that He might be surrounded by worshipping saints for all eternity. And that is what will make heaven HEAVEN for us — to be with Him, who Himself is the Light of Glory of that celestial sphere. He alone will satisfy our hearts forever, nought with Him our hearts dividing, to be ever and only occupied with Him, to behold His beauty and to explore, without ever exhausting, the infinite greatness of His person.

He and I in that bright glory,
One deep joy shall share,
Mine to be forever with Him,
His that I am there.

It will be Christ's presence on earth during His Millennial reign that will bring untold blessings to this world and to Israel in particular. Having been given His rightful place by the nation that once rejected His sovereignty, He will restore them to the position that God intended for them. Their troubles, unparalleled in history, will give way to hitherto unknown joy as, in that coming day, that oppressed and suffering remnant will acclaim their Messiah. The metropolis of the then world will be Jerusalem, for "the Lord dwelleth in Zion", Joel 3.21.

But now, dear believer, are you presently satisfied with His presence in the assembly? Is that what attracts you to the place of the Name or do you hanker after the innovations and inventions of men? A sense of the Divine presence really ought to be the greatest distinguishing feature of an assembly. It was the presence of David that brightened the cave of Adullam and drew the discontented, the debtors and the distressed.

Would you prefer the sensual and the social to the spiritual? Is the enjoyment of Christ's presence not enough to satisfy both young and old? Is not being where He has promised to be in the midst of His people (Matt.18.20), the greatest privilege on earth?

His presence, however is conditional. If we are indulging in sinful practices, if we are dealing unrighteously in our business, if we are dishonest in our affairs, we

are going to hinder enjoyment of His presence by the entire company, “. . . a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump”, 1Cor.5.6. When Achan sinned in Josh.7 and “took of the accursed thing”, “the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel”. His sin affected the whole company and had disastrous consequences. Sin and the Divine presence are mutually incompatible, they can never co-exist.

In 2Cor.6.14-16, five questions are asked which are designed to prick our conscience, to prompt consideration and to promote concern. They serve to reinforce the fact that God is holy and His presence demands abstention from sin and every form of evil.

“What fellowship hath unrighteousness with righteousness”?

“What communion hath light with darkness”?

“What concord hath Christ with Belial”?

“What part hath he that believeth with an infidel”?

“What agreement hath the temple of God with idols”?

Merely knowing this is not in itself a preservative, we are weak at the very best and the flesh is powerful but humbly looking to God, we can be preserved.

May we value His presence and increasingly enjoy the blessings it inevitably brings and may that characterise our gatherings, our homes and our personal lives until that blessed moment, not far distant, when we shall be “with Christ; which is far better”, Phil.1.23.

PARDON GIVEN

I ponder oft, in quietude,
The Saviour's death, so rough and rude,
Those nail pierced hands,
That spear torn side,
God's Son refused and crucified.
By crowds reviled and spat upon,
By soldiers mocked, with thorn made crown,
All His disciples,
Feared and fled,
Forsaken there, He hung and bled.
Yet by His side, a thief could own,
His own misdeeds, had brought him down,
But of the Saviour's,
Cruel fate,
Could then declare His guiltless state.
Request for pardon, quickly given,
A promise made, a place in Heaven,
Oh that men might,
That Saviour see,
Own their own guilt, and pardoned be.
May be sung to 'Deep Harmony'. (W. Beynon, Wales).

PAPERS ON PROPHECY

by The Late W. W. Fereday (written in 1897/98)

VOLUME 2

9(d) — The Future of Russia

Micah 5 apparently refers to the Russian invasion also. "The Assyrian" finds his antitype partly in the king of the North, and partly in the Gog of Ezekiel. Micah 5, in our judgment, refers to Gog. Christ, the true Judge of Israel, is then in the land; He who once was born in Bethlehem Ephratah, and whose goings forth have been from everlasting, is then in the midst of His people, to feed, bless, and protect them. This makes the expedition of Gog and his hosts the more grave. "And this Man shall come into our land; and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof; thus shall He deliver us from the Assyrian when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders", (Micah 3.5-6).

This is the final settlement of the Eastern question. This great question, which has perplexed all the leading men of Europe so long, Christ Himself will then set at rest for ever. None shall possess Zion and the glorious land but His elect; all other aspirants shall be disappointed, and all objectors and opponents shall be destroyed. Jerusalem, instead of being a burdensome stone to the nations, will be the centre of the earth, all dominion and glory flowing from thence.

Both Israel and the nations will learn a solemn lesson from all these appalling events. As regards Israel, we read, "So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward", (Ezek.39.22). Their hearts, now so cold and obdurate, will ere that day be turned to the Lord; and they will then be teachable scholars in the school of Jehovah. The nations, too, will then learn their lesson, that Jehovah will not suffer Israel to be tampered with by others, but will deal with them Himself in His righteousness, that their evil may be purged away in order to receive His lasting blessing: "The heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against Me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies; so fell they all by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid My face from them".

After these words, Jehovah proceeds to speak of their blessings, closing with the gracious assurance, "Neither will I hide My face any more from them; for I have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God", (Ezek.39.23-29).

How privileged is the Christian to be in possession of all this knowledge beforehand! Nothing is withheld from the heavenly joint-heirs of the risen Christ. Though our own proper portion is unquestionably in the Father's house on high, and not on the earth, we are permitted to know all that will transpire in this scene both prior and subsequent to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. May this lead us, not into a spirit of merely idle curiosity, than which nothing is more serious and dangerous in the things of God, but into earnest separation from the world, while faithfully bearing testimony to it. May our hearts ever be set on Christ in heaven, that when we hear His gracious voice saying, "Surely I come quickly", we may be able joyfully to respond, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus", (Rev.22.20).

—(to be continued D.V.)

“LO, I COME”

by John B. D. Page (Weston-super-Mare)

“Search the scriptures; . . . which testify of Me,” so the Lord Jesus commanded the Jews who rejected His equality with God. Concerning this important doctrine of the Person of Christ, only the scriptures bear witness to, and are the final authority of it.

Our Lord's command to search the scriptures was not new. It was practised by men of God in preceding centuries. In his first epistle, Peter tells how the Old Testament prophets “searched diligently” the prophecies about the spiritual salvation to come besides “searching” by the Spirit of Christ their own writings concerning the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.

In like manner we too should search the scriptures for things concerning Christ. In so doing, we discover that the Pre-incarnate Christ spoke on two occasions of His coming into the world. Using the same words both times and speaking in the first person singular, He said: “Lo, I come”. His first utterance was through the psalmist (Psalm 40.7) which refers to Messiah's first coming in humility according to the context. The second, about 600 years later, was through the prophet Zechariah (2.10) which relates to Messiah's second coming in power and glory as shown by the context.

In these scriptures Christ is portrayed clearly in two ways. The psalmist depicts Messiah in servitude whilst the prophet presents Him in sovereignty, both of which will be considered.

1. Christ the Servant:

Sometimes in the Psalms, the problem is to determine that which refers to the psalmist and that which concerns Christ. With Ps.40.6-8a, the difficulty is resolved in Heb.10.5-7 where these verses are quoted and applied unequivocally to Christ.

Speaking to Jehovah, the Pre-incarnate Messiah says, “Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; . . .” The Hebrew for “sacrifice” (*zebach*) denotes a peace offering, and that for “offering” (*minchah*) means a meal offering. Continuing He says, “. . . burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required”, v.6. These four offerings, ordained by God for Israel to offer to Him (Lev.1-7), typify various aspects of Christ's sacrificial death. Instead of starting with the burnt offering as in Leviticus 1, the first is the peace offering which signifies that, by His death, Christ became our peace. And so, peace with God is where we start in this paragraph. Next the meal offering typifies Christ as the sinless Man offering up Himself in death. As the burnt offering was offered by the offerer of his own voluntary will, so Christ fulfilled voluntarily, in His death, the will of God. The sin offering portrays Christ as the sinless One who was made sin for us. By saying that God did “not desire” these offerings and were “not required” by Him, the Pre-incarnate

Christ is indicating not their repudiation but rather their inadequacy in the sight of God and foreseeing they were “a shadow of good things to come”, (Heb.10.1).

Between the first two offerings and the last two, the divine Speaker declares to Jehovah, “Mine ears hast Thou opened”, implying His ability to hear Jehovah's voice. If the Hebrew word for “opened” is translated “pierced” as it is in Ps.22.16, then there may be an illusion to a Hebrew servant with one bored ear as a mark of life-long servitude (Ex.21.1-6). But in contrast the divine Servant has both ears pierced in indicating His absolute submission to His Master. In the question of these verses in Heb.10.5. ff, instead of “Mine ears hast Thou opened” we read “a body hast Thou prepared for Me” which is from the Septuagint Version. Adam's body was created by God. But our Lord's body was “prepared” for Him to become incarnate. In that body, He pursued a path of obedience during the days of His flesh.

In the midst of this cluster of verses in Ps.40, there comes from the lips of the Pre-incarnate Messiah this utterance: “Then said I, Lo, I come; . . .”, (v.7). Here, He predicts His first coming into the world by way of assuming Manhood. In becoming Man, He never ceased to be God. According to this verse cited in Heb.10.7 (R.V.) He says, “Then said I, Lo, I am come . . .” Not “I come” but “I am come”, signifying His first coming was then a fact of history.

Returning to Ps.40.7, “. . . in the volume of the book it is written of Me”, so He says. All scripture has Christ in view (cp. Luke 24.44).

As the Servant, He says to Jehovah, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: . . .”, v.8. In the days of His flesh, He said, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me . . .”, Jn.4.34. His delight was in doing the will of God. Within the Godhead, such delight was reciprocal, for Jehovah says, “Behold My servant, . . . in whom My soul delighteth; . . . Is.42.1.

Do our lives day by day give delight to our Saviour and Lord? It is a question that we may ask ourselves.

This brings us to our second point for consideration.

2. Christ the Sovereign:

Like the psalmist of old, the prophet Zechariah of centuries later heard the Pre-incarnate Messiah declare: “Lo, I come”.

Scarcely two decades had passed since comparatively few Jews left Babylon and returned to Judah. Among the returnees there was the prophet Zechariah, who was born in Babylon and young in age. He had a message from the Lord by way of eight visions to proclaim to these people.

In the third vision that Zechariah had from Jehovah, Ch.2, the people are called upon to be jubilant: “Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: . . .” In addressing them as “the daughter of Zion”, a future generation is in view, not of the prophet's day but of a day to dawn when “all Israel shall be saved”, Rom.11.26. Why should these future citizens of Zion, a poetical and prophetic name for Jerusalem, be jubilant? Why should they burst forth in song and joy? The reason follows: “. . . for, Lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee,

saith the Lord", v.10.

This outburst of joy, still future, will be in anticipation of Jehovah-Messiah's coming as He says, "Lo, I come". This is His second coming — not to the air for the Church but to Israel in the land. Some centuries later the Lord Jesus, speaking of this event in the third person, said, "they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory", Luke 21.27. In that day a regenerate Israel will respond spontaneously saying, "... this is the Lord: we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation", Is.25.9.

Not only will Messiah come again but He promises Israel: "... and I will dwell in the midst of thee ...", v.10. This means that He will make His abode among His people in the City of Jerusalem. Early in this vision the prophet was shown that "Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls", v.4. An unwallled city was unprecedented in Zechariah's day and in succeeding centuries. But in a coming day a re-built Jerusalem will extend far beyond the boundaries of its ancient walls. Messiah will dwell, not in the City itself but, according to Ezekiel's prophecy, in the sanctuary of the millennial Temple which, as the glorified Messiah says, will be "the place of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel", Ezk.43.7,cp.1-6.

CHRIST IN THE MIDST

His preincarnate glories blazed
Amidst the hosts on high,
While all creation sang and praised
His virtues in the sky.

Shepherds and wise men gathered round
The Babe of Bethlehem,
Their hearts rejoiced when Him they
found
Who came for folks like them.

Doctors and teachers of the law
All sat around and gazed,
At One who taught without a flaw,
They listened there amazed.

The crowds in thousands gathered thick
Around our blessed Lord,
The hungry, thirsty, needy, sick
All pressed to hear His Word.

Uplifted 'midst that milling throng,
The suffering Saviour see,
The lion, dogs and bulls so strong
All gathered round the tree.

The gospel preachers Christ declare
And lift Him up to tell,
How sinners lost can heaven share
And all things can be well.

The saints in many places meet
According to His Word,
Gathered to His blest name — how
sweet
Remembering the Lord.

Soon, very soon, we'll meet again
With all the ransomed throng,
Around the Lamb, still freshly slain,
To sing redemption's song.

M. J. Cordner, Kilwinning.

MARY'S ACT OF LOVE AND DEVOTION

John 12.1.9

By R. Webb, Norwich, England

The home at Bethany was our Lord's haven of rest in those final dark days. Here only could He find peace and love. That was all the more wonderful for the presence of Lazarus whose very life was His doing.

The act of Love and Devotion

In such company, on the eve of His betrayal and suffering there comes to our Lord's heart deep joy from the simple act that was destined to be interwoven into the fabric of the gospel, Mk.14.9. It was the act of one who was often found at the feet of Christ in joy and sorrow. She has learned of Him, and is near to His heart at this moment. Much is contained in this great memorial act.

Judas Iscariot's Thoughts

Judas and his like just could not understand. The very fragrance of the ointment must have nauseated them. To them it spoke of needless extravagance. Some would say that Mary could have expressed her love without throwing away such a costly gift, but nothing was too costly for Mary. Hearts that do not love cannot understand the motive behind such giving. Mary's act was glorious extravagance.

The Cross of Christ

It was in keeping with the cross of Christ, the drama soon to be enacted, where He would give Himself, His all, for the salvation of mankind. There was no easy way to procure forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God, it could only be the precious blood of Christ, The Lord accepts the extravagant gift, and commends Mary's action. He is not heedless of the poor that might have benefited. He cared for them far more than ever did Judas. The Christian who has caught a vision of what Christ has done, and has begun to respond in love, will count up all the cost and pay it gladly.

King David said to Ornan, "I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost", 1Chron.21-24. If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him. In Mark 14.6, The Lord speaks of this memorial act as being a "good work". In Matt.5.16, the Lord commands us to let the world see our good works. Behind Mary's lovely deed was a heart of love for her Master; love that was unrestrained, giving all. Some may think that a few drops of this ointment surely would have been sufficient, but not so with Mary; in a moment of consuming devotion the whole box had gone. For Mary it was now or never, and she knew it. Our Lord accepts Mary's anointing as a preparation for His coming death.

After the cross she would realise in a fuller measure just what she had done. With all her imperfect understanding, Mary was very near to the heart of Christ at

this moment. Mary may have opened herself to criticism, even perhaps to rejection — but Mary acted. The disciples were painfully slow to understand the secret of their Master as a suffering Servant and Messiah, but Mary knew because she had often sat at Jesus' feet.

The Presence of Judas

The presence of Judas in this setting seems to spoil a lovely picture, but the gospel writers agree that this touching significant memorial act was the last straw for Judas. In John 13 the Lord is with His disciples in the Upper Room. After washing and wiping His disciples feet, He announced that, “one of you shall betray Me”, and then indicated by the giving of the sop that it would be Judas. Judas left and we read the dark and solemn statement, “it was night”. We know he went out into the lonely blackness of a night of treachery.

The very beauty of Mary's act must have angered the soul of him who was so out of sympathy with Christ. Mary and Judas both left their memorial, but what a difference. As we think of Mary's gift the *extravagance of it*, nothing was too costly for Him. Mary had more insight than the other women, or any of the disciples, they came to anoint His body, but it was too late, He had Risen. Then there was the *fragrance of the gift*, something to be enjoyed not only by Christ but by all in the house.

Christ has given His all for us, we are bought with a price — what have we given for Him? Isaac Watts in his lovely hymn said:

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small,
Love so amazing, so devine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all”.

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (50)

by Lawrence Perkins (U.S.A.)

I was born in Toronto, Ontario in 1945 and we moved to the Niagara Falls area a few years later. My father was extremely interested in music and played in dance bands on weekends. As a boy it seemed only natural for me to pursue a musical career. In my teens I began playing in bands with my dad and my ambition in life was to be a jazz musician. Actually though, what I really lived for was pleasure. Wanting to be a Christian would have been the farthest thing from my mind.

Moving away from home to go to university in the big city of Toronto meant no more parental restrictions. Now I could do whatever I wanted. To me this was really living and I pursued pleasure and sin with increasing intensity. Although in school during the day, I often played in bands at night. During my last years at university, I was introduced to drugs. It wasn't too long before I started believing that drugs were opening my mind to new realities. But how deceived I was!

After graduating, I worked as a professional musician playing in nightclubs. My

family and friends thought I was doing great, but inside I was empty. I began to investigate eastern religions such as Hinduism and Zen Buddhism. But I found trying to lift myself up to God by my bootstraps to be extremely difficult. Eventually I left the entertainment business because it seemed so artificial. I was looking for something real but didn't know where to find it.

About this time an elderly widow, for whom I was doing some work, began to talk to me about the Lord. (I don't recall ever having heard the gospel before). The lady was very kind to me in spite of my long hair and beard. At first I didn't believe her and I argued in favour of the eastern religions. But it was becoming apparent to me that some of the habits I had were ruining my life and that definite changes were needed.

As I tried to change my lifestyle, however, the reality began to sink in that I was powerless! Habits that once seemed harmless now had me in a vice-like grip. It was like waking up in the middle of a nightmare, only this was all too real. What happened to the bright future I once had? Life had suddenly become a dead end. At twenty-five years of age, having forsaken all for pleasure, I was now all alone. I felt like I was sliding down a greased tube — going down with no one to help me and with no hope of escape.

It was the worst time of my life. And yet it was a turning point. Before I had been proud, self-willed and self-righteous. But God brought me to the place where I finally saw that I was spiritually lost and on my way to hell. Although I knew very little about the gospel, this I did know — I was a sinner without strength to save myself and I needed a Saviour more than anything else in the world. And one afternoon back in June 1970, like a drowning man, I simply placed my trust in the Saviour of sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A wonderful thing happened that afternoon. The Lord saved me — without special feelings, visions, or anything spectacular. In fact, it was some time before I really began to understand the gospel clearly. But what joy filled my soul as I learned truth such as “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin”. Before being saved I used to wish I could have a fresh start in life — but the guilt of the past would always be there. It was a dream come true to realise that Christ had washed me white as snow and that in Him I was a new creation. There was also a new power in my life that I had never experienced before. The Lord was delivering me, little by little, from the habits that had been enslaving me. I began to read the Bible in earnest and cry out to the Lord in prayer because I could see that He was the answer to all my need.

Shortly after being saved I lived and worked at a commune which tried to help young people get off drugs. Unfortunately I got involved with a cult with which some at the commune were connected. Thankfully I was reading the Bible and praying on a consistent basis and it wasn't too long before I began to see the error being taught. After a year I left both the commune and the cult.

Three years later, while passing out tracts in downtown Windsor, I met two sisters from the assembly that meets at Partington Avenue. At the time I was

involved with a Pentecostal group but God was leading, even though I was not directly aware of it. At the first assembly meeting I attended, a brother, who had been an alcoholic, gave his testimony and preached the gospel. It spoke to my heart and from time to time I came back. The simplicity of the assembly meetings appealed to me. At the first breaking of bread I observed, a brother read from Psalm 22 and spoke a little from it. A sense of the Lord's presence, the place of nearness of His people, and the pre-eminence given to Christ were all used by God to draw me to the One I had come to love. Nevertheless, I sat back for a year before asking for fellowship. I wanted to be absolutely sure I was where the Lord wanted me. The morning I broke bread with the assembly for the first time will not easily be erased from my memory. Two things stand out: an overwhelming sense that the Lord Jesus Christ was in the midst, and the assurance that after so many years of wandering I was finally where the Lord wanted me to be. The passage of time has only confirmed these truths to my soul.

In the succeeding years I sought to be of help in the assembly wherever there was opportunity. In 1982, James Beattie asked me to help him preach the gospel in a tent in Deckerville, Michigan. A number were saved that summer and the Lord began to deal with me about full-time service. At first the idea seemed preposterous, for I thought, "Who am I"? But as I waited on the Lord, portions of Scripture such as Isaiah 41.9-10 began to weigh upon me. There was no sudden illumination but rather a gradual and deepening conviction. As months passed, the burden of exercise to give all my time to the work of the Lord increased. At work (I was a school teacher) there came a crossroads. My assignment was changed and it looked as if I would have to devote myself to much study in taking additional courses. But just about all my spare time was being spent serving the Lord in Michigan so I had neither the time nor the desire for such additional study. God knew about the dilemma however and in January of 1984 I was commended to the work of the Lord by the assembly in Windsor.

It certainly appeared that Michigan was to be my field of labour, but when I applied for a visa to move from Canada to the USA, it soon became clear that this door was shut. For the next few years I worked around the Windsor area. In 1987 however, the Lord began to bring Michigan before me once gain and I reapplied for a visa. This time the door was open and a visa was granted. It was encouraging to know that my original exercise about Michigan was not wrong after all, but just a little premature.

As I look back over the years of my life, how thankful I am that the Lord ever saved me . . . and how thankful for all the way He has led and guided. There have been difficult times when all seemed dark and I hardly knew which way to turn. But God is faithful. ". . . there hath not failed one word of all His good promise which He promised . . ."

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think . . . unto Him be glory . . ."

Good Tidings from Heaven

PEACE TALKS

Here in Ulster, plans have been afoot for years and many attempts have been made to secure a "just and lasting peace" and to include all parties in "meaningful and substantive" discussions around a common table. In various parts of the world a tenuous peace obtains and the situation is tense and volatile. A faint and flickering flame of hope encourages politicians to explore every avenue to bring hostilities to an end and bring about reconciliation.

In this article however, I wish to concentrate on a weightier matter by far, a more pressing problem, a more urgent need — your reconciliation to God. 2Cor.5.20, "Be ye reconciled to God". That peace does not exist between you and God, if you are yet unsaved, must be obvious to you. His presence affords you no comfort, you take no delight in His will or His Word, you reject His claims over you, you assert your own opinions, you shun His people and there is a very apparent need of reconciliation. Romans 5.10, "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son . . ." Col.1.21, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled". Isaiah 59.2, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear".

You may think that you are sailing confidently and certainly to the unruffled calm of heaven's blissful shore but, be warned, you are sailing steadily and surely into disaster. Very soon, your little barque will be tossed mercilessly in the mountainous waves of death, into that thunderous cascade that falls forever downwards, to be at last sucked down in a whirlpool of judgment, helpless and hopeless, into the unfathomable depths of darkness and despair in the lake of fire, whence no one ever will or can return. You may think this is a gross exaggeration of your fate, but, it is rather understating the tragic horror of what awaits those who die unsaved and unforgiven.

But there are many obstacles in any peace process — some parties are not welcome and certain conditions are hard to meet. God raises no such obstacles, He has demonstrated a genuine willingness to meet you and pardon your sins. Isaiah 1.18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool". This He can do righteously since Christ has died to procure peace for the believing, penitent sinner. Col.1.20, "And, having made peace through the blood of His cross . . .", Eph.2.14, "For He is our peace . . ."

Owning your guilt and acknowledging your sins, you can trust Christ and know at last, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding", Phil.4.7. Romans 5.1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ".

God has made peace and is ready to pardon and willing to forgive — the responsibility is yours to accept what has been done and have matters put right between you and God. Failure to do this will have disastrous consequences. Peace will never again be yours, rest will forever elude you and sleep will never come to grant respite from the relentless remorse, pain and misery in the eternal abode of the lost. Rev.14.11, "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day or night..."

Peace with God is something worth obtaining, to think and act otherwise is folly of the highest order. Job 22.21, "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace".



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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Advisory Editor : A. M. S. Gooding

Editor: B. Currie

Correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to:

The Editor, 49 Glenburn Road, Dunmurry, N. Ireland, BT17 9AN.
Telephone (01232) 621343.

Secretary/Treasurer : William Neill, 109 Lurgan Road,
Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.
Telephone (018206) 24238.

Committee : Tom Armstrong, Thomas Beggs, Ronnie Johnston,
James McKeown, James Moore, Roy Reynolds.

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BEHOLD YOUR KING

(Meditations in Matthew)

by Jim Flanigan (Belfast)

13. Early Miracles (Ch.8)

“Where the word of a King is, there is power”, said Solomon (Ecc.8.4). Jesus now comes down from the mountain to embark upon a miraculous ministry which will demonstrate His power. They have been on the mountain, elevated for a while in the consideration of the children of the kingdom. But down below there is corruption and sin, demon possession and sadness. They must come down from the mount to the wretchedness of man below. There is leprosy and palsy and fever and tempest, and the King will move in grace among them. After His teaching, His touch. After His preaching, His power. Peter will look back and say, “Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you” (Acts 2.22).

“And behold there came a leper”, Luke the Doctor says that the man was full of leprosy. He was leprous through and through. He was incurably hopeless and helpless. But he heard of Jesus and he came humbly but confidently to the Saviour’s feet. He pleaded earnestly, appealing to the Lord’s ability to heal him. Jesus touched him. It was not a fleeting momentary touch. The word “touch” means “to handle freely”. The Saviour touches the untouchable. He handles the defiled limbs but Himself remains undefiled. The leper is cleansed and the law is satisfied as the man shows himself to the priest and offers the appropriate gift (Lev.14.2-4).

As they enter Capernaum now there comes a Roman centurion, a Gentile, with a plea for a sick slave. He seemed an honourable man, who, according to Luke, was highly respected by the local Jewish community and had indeed built them a synagogue. He pleads his unworthiness, but he knows all about authority and he pleads this too. He knows as a centurion, that behind every command of his there was the authority of Rome and of Caesar. He was a man under that authority of Rome and of Caesar. He reasons therefore, that behind every command of Jesus there was the authority of heaven and of God. “Speak the word only”, he begs, and Jesus marvels. On two occasions only do we read that Jesus marvelled. He marvelled at the unbelief of the men of Nazareth (Mk.6.6). Here He marvels at the faith of a Gentile, and the power which had been manifested to Israel now reaches out beyond the nation to this Roman centurion as the word is spoken and the sick servant is healed. So, says the Saviour, many will come from the East and from the West, from the remoteness of Gentiledom, to enjoy the things that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob enjoy, and many of those who were, nationally and-nominally, the children of the kingdom, will be shut out.

They come now to Peter’s house. Peter’s mother-in-law is ill, lying in a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her and she arose and served Him and His disciples. Perhaps it was a little picture of what He would do with Israel. How He longed to touch that fevered nation, to lift them out of their sad condition and see them engage in a ministry for God.

As the sun was setting over the Galilean hills the multitudes gathered to Him in the evening hour. They brought the sick, the diseased, the demon possessed, and He healed them. It was a fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy, “Himself took our infirmities and bare

our sickness". He would suffer with them. He would share the burden of their griefs and their sorrows. He was on His way to Calvary where the sinful root cause of it all would be laid upon Him and He would suffer as a sin-bearer. But now, as daylight faded He must take ship and cross the lake to the other side.

As He would leave them a scribe appeals to Him, "Master, I will follow Thee". Jesus answered him in words that have become immortal. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests". By day and by night the creatures had their resting places. But while the foxes hid in their lairs by day and the birds went to their nests by night, the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. He did not have a settled home down here, and, in any case, wherever He went to rest, men seemed to make constant demands upon Him. He had no resting place. We cannot tell how this observation affected that scribe. Would he still follow?

Yet another came, apparently avowing that he too would follow. But not yet! He desired to wait until the death of his father. Then, when he had attended to his father's burial, he would follow. Not so, says Jesus. Let the dead bury their dead. Let the materially minded attend to things-material. You follow me.

How much has been written of the storm that followed. A great tempest. The ship deluged in the waves. The fear of the disciples, experienced fishermen though they were. Then the tranquillity of the sleeping Saviour in the midst of it all. They wake Him. He gently rebukes their feeble faith and then rebukes the winds and waves. They obeyed Him, and there was a great calm. How He still longs to calm the storms in the lives of His people.

But now there is another storm. It rages in the breasts of two demoniacs living among the Gadarene tombs. The demon possessed man of Mark 5 and Luke 8 apparently had a deranged companion. There are two of them in Matthew's account. They are fierce and dangerous men who make the road impassable for travellers, but they recognise the Son of God. He casts the demon tormentors into a herd of swine. The storm is hushed in the lives of the demon possessed as the herd rushes down the steep slope to die in the blue waters of Galilee.

How sadly does this chapter end. They beg Him to depart out of their coasts. They prefer their swine. One John Oxenham has so aptly put their plea into a telling rhyme—

Rabbi, begone!
Thy powers bring loss to us and ours,
Our ways are not as Thine—
Thou lovest men—we, swine!
O get Thee gone, Omnipotence
And take this fool of Thine!
His soul? what care we for his soul?
Since we have lost our swine!
The Christ went sadly,
He had wrought for them a sign
Of love and tenderness divine—
They wanted swine!

As another has said, "The curtain falls upon the fairest sight in that countryside; a man at rest, robed by his Deliverer in a garment of righteousness and at last in his right mind". But Matthew, Mark, and Luke all alike record the sad detail that the Gardarenes besought Jesus to leave their coasts. Has the heart of man changed since?

—to be continued (D.V.)

PAPERS ON PROPHECY

by The Late W. W. Fereday (written in 1897/98)

VOLUME 2

10(a)—Babylon and the Beast

The picture before us in these chapters is a peculiarly solemn one to the Christian. It is not now the judgment of the ungodly world for its many sins and rejection of the Son of God, but of her who has for ages pretended to be the true spouse of Christ in the earth. It is His utter and final rejection of the vilest system that has ever darkened the earth—a system which, in spite of its manifold corruptions and evils, has all along claimed to be the true Church of God, outside of which there is no salvation.

The judgment of Babylon evidently occurs under the sixth vial, and is spoken of in that connection, ch.19.19; but the brief notice there given of it was not sufficient for the Spirit of God. The subject being one of unusual gravity and importance, He pauses, ere proceeding with the prophecy, to devote two whole chapters to the details of it.

We will first examine ch.17. It consists of two parts; v1-6 furnish us with the vision; v7-18 with the interpretation. It opens in a very remarkable manner: “And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters”, v1. No careful reader can fail to be struck with the similarity of the language here to that in ch.21.9. In the latter place the true bride, the Lamb’s wife, is shown in all the beauty and glory with which she is to be Divinely arrayed; in the chapter before us we have the devil’s evil and offensive counterfeit. We believe the Spirit of God purposely used almost identical language in introducing both, that the contrast might be fully before our minds. Assuredly our souls may gather profit and instructions from the consideration of both pictures, though so widely different in character.

The widespread influence of the harlot is declared in the fact that she “sitteth upon many waters”. These are expressly explained to us in v15: “The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues”. Local influence has never satisfied the false Church; she has always claimed to be “Catholic”. Her evil arms have been extended north, south, east, and west, to the demoralisation and injury of all who have sunk beneath her sway, and, above all, to the dishonour of Christ, whose name she has professedly owned. Her ceaseless activity by means of her many agents and societies is well known to us all. Would God we were as earnest in spreading the precious truth of Christ!

Next, her evil character is declared as the holy eye of God sees it: “With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication”, v2. “Fornication” is frequently used in a symbolic way in Scripture. The following are a few instances

among many: 2Chron.21.11; Isa.33.17; Ezek.16.29. It means evil intercourse with the world. Alas that this should have been true of any bearing the name of Christ! The Church is the deeply loved spouse of the absent Christ, and belongs to heaven, not to this dark and corrupt scene at all. Her path should ever have been that of a stranger, simply passing through on her way to meet the Bridegroom in glory. But so early as Paul's day the world crept in amongst the saints. He watched with deep concern the working of this at Corinth and elsewhere. To the Corinthians he wrote: "*Already ye are full, already ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us, and I would to God ye did reign that we also might reign with you*", 1Cor.4.8. There was a disposition to accept ease and honour here rather than to cheerfully bear the cross of Christ.

Observe the yearning of his faithful heart in 2Cor.11.2-3: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ; but I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ". Babylon knows nothing of such sentiments as these, but has trafficked with the great ones of the earth for her own evil ends, and has simply stupefied with her corruptions the mass of those beneath her baleful influence. To fall into her snare is to lose all spiritual sensibility, and even conscience itself.

—to be continued (D.V.)

Gates of Jerusalem, Nehemiah 3

by D. S. Parrack, England

PAPER 6

x) The East Gate, v29.

The final gate, "the east gate" v29 should be an encouragement as regards both outreach and our building up internally. The first people to see the sun rise would be those watching at the east gate and, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings" Mal.4.2. But although that promise is unshakeable there are degrees of present enjoyment of the assurance of its fulfilment.

"You that fear (reverence) my name" applies to all true believers and when the Lord Jesus returns, as He most surely will, not one of them is excluded from the promises involved with that return. "We shall not all sleep" so some will not finish life in this world that way, but "we shall all be changed" not one left out. "The dead shall be raised incorruptible and we (i.e. those still alive at the time) shall be changed" 1Cor.15.51-52.

But whilst all Christians, both dead and living, "shall be caught up together - to meet the Lord in the air" 1Thess.4.17, there are other promises for us to appreciate for ourselves. It is one thing to know that the Lord Jesus is coming back, it is

something more to be actively looking forward to and anticipating His coming.

There is, for example, the promise given, through Peter, to “the elders which are among you” that “when the Chief Shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” 1Pet.5.4. But that promise is linked very clearly to those shepherds meeting the conditions of the foregoing verses. These include details as to the tasks to be carried out and factors which should not be allowed to impede or spoil the work, see vs 2.3. Elders, shepherds, fulfilling such conditions are unlikely to achieve glory in a form which the world recognises as such, but even if they did it would be totally eclipsed by the shining out of the promised “crown of glory”. Carry out your tasks then in such a fashion “that no man take thy crown”, Rev.3.11, and that means not just taking it for themselves but simply depriving you of it.

‘That is a fine promise for elders’, you may say ‘but I’m not an elder, what about me? What about the rest of us?’ “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me in that day”. So, a crown for elders and now another one, this time for the apostle. But Paul continues, “And not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing” 2Tim.4.8. ‘Loving His appearing’ is more than believing about it, it is enjoying it in advance, anticipating participation. Why a crown of righteousness though? Because a true consciousness of the assurance of “the promise of His coming” 2Pet.3.4, will in itself generate righteous living. “He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure” 1John3.3. It is “the righteous judge” awarding the “crown of righteousness” and it relates to the living of a practically righteous life. Do not think that because you have imputed righteousness as your birthright to heaven, that practical righteousness is of no consequence. As Paul exclaims when faced with a somewhat similar argument, “God forbid” Rom.6.12. Peter, speaking of our “looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God” concludes, “Wherefore beloved seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless” 2Pet.3.12-14, and that surely is practical righteousness.

How though does that link up with earlier thoughts about outreach. The second coming is something for believers to look forward to, but how can it be applied to our endeavours to reach those still outside?

Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, speaking first of their conversion, see 1Thess.1.6, goes on to show the results of that in the form of outreach, v7-8. Just what perception of their faith was engendered in the targets of their outreach? “They themselves show unto us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” v9. Not just a turning from, also a positive turning to, and that turning went on to service, acceptable service. But even that was not all that was made plain by the Thessalonians’ testimony. They were seen “to wait for His (God’s) Son from heaven even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” v10.

Is our outreach as comprehensive as that, so that people can see what has happened to you and the Person who has made it all happen? Go to the east gate. Get hold of the promise of His coming, better still, let the assurance and implication of

that promise get hold of you. Then, not only will you as individuals be blessed, your assembly will be built up and your outreaching be enhanced and widened in scope, which means a sharing of your blessings with others.

We have looked at ten gates, suggested lessons that can be drawn from their names and done so in the context of the local assembly as an entity. Gates are made to facilitate both entry and exit, going in and coming out. You go out to others and you will have the joy and privilege of seeing others come in. But make sure before you go out that there is something worthwhile for others to come into. Being saved isn't an end in itself, it is a new beginning. See that those who embark on that new beginning are provided with the wherewithal to carry on. —(concluded)

MEN OF GENESIS

by J. E. Todd, England

3. Noah and his building

We have noted that in the book of Genesis the lives of many men of God centre around a single feature. In the case of Noah it was his building.

Before Noah ever built the ark, he engaged in an even more important building task. A building project that every Christian must engage in, the most important project of all.

Noah built a reputation with God

‘Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord . . . Noah was a righteous man, and blameless in his generation: Noah walked with God’, Gen.6.8-9,R.V. margin. What were the constituents of this divinely acceptable reputation? Noah’s life had five characteristics which were the components of his reputation before God. His righteousness, which means that Noah sincerely sought to live out the commandments of God. His blamelessness, Noah was not sinlessly perfect, but he was blameless of the wickedness of his own generation, ‘God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth’, v5. His walk with God, Noah lived in harmony and fellowship with God. Also his faith, ‘By faith Noah . . . became heir of the righteousness which is by faith’, Heb.11.7. Finally, he was obedient, ‘Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he’, Gen.6.22. These are the ingredients of the life that is worthy in God’s sight. ‘That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God’, Col.1.9-10.

Noah built the Ark

It was Noah’s faith that led him to build the ark. The building of the ark proved many things. First, that Noah had listened to God, this was the beginning of his salvation. In our land today the good news of salvation is preached every week in hundreds of gospel meetings, but how many of our countrymen are willing to come

and listen and be saved? They must hear as the first step to salvation. ‘How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard’? Rom.10.14. “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel”, Mark 16.15.

Also, Noah demonstrated his faith by his works, he built the ark. ‘By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark’, Heb.11.7. “I will show thee my faith by my works”, James 2.18.

Noah also condemned the unbelievers of his own generation, for he proved by his own salvation that salvation was available by the grace of God if only it was accepted by faith. ‘Noah . . . prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world’, Heb.11.17.

Finally, the obedient act of building the ark proved to be his own salvation. All believers must with the same industry prove their faith by building their lives upon the rock of Christ’s teaching. “Therefore whosoever heareth these saying of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock”, Matt.7.24. “If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments”, John 14.15,R.V.

Noah built a Vineyard

“Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard’, Gen.9.20. Such a task involved much building. This fact is illustrated in Isa.5.1-2. “My well-beloved hath a vineyard . . . he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein”. But this proved to be Noah’s undoing, the sad story of his drunkenness and the results that followed, Gen.9.20-25. Do we spend too much time building in our lives those things which, although legitimate of themselves, by over-indulgence harm our spiritual life, testimony and service? Are our responsibilities to the Lord given second place to our education, careers, businesses, holidays, pastimes and pleasures? ‘No man can serve two masters . . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon’, Matt. 6.24. Do we spend time building in our lives for the compromise of our own testimony? ‘Now if any man build upon this foundation . . . wood, hay, stubble; every man’s work shall be made manifest . . . If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss’, 1Cor.3.10-15.

—to be continued (D.V.)

INFIDEL LITERATURE

An atheist sent a parcel of infidel literature to a young man, advising him to read it in preference to the Bible. The Christian wrote back: “Dear Sir: If you have anything better than the Sermon on the Mount, more beautiful than the story of the Prodigal Son or the Good Samaritan; or any code of morals higher than the ten commandments or the ‘Golden Rule’ of Jesus Christ; or more consoling and beautiful than the 23rd Psalm; or anything that will reveal to me a more loving and merciful God or will throw more light on the future—send it along”!

He received no answer. (Selected)

Assembly Testimony Bible Class

by J. Riddle (Cheshunt)

The Church and The Churches

(20) Assembly Discipline (2)

Don't forget to have 1Cor.5 open. In our first paper we addressed the first of four questions (1) When is assembly discipline required? v1, and (2) What does assembly discipline involve? v2-5. So far as the latter is concerned, we noticed that assembly discipline involved (A) the need for a proper attitude Godward, v2, and (B) the need for proper action manward, we have already drawn attention to (i) the parties concerned. We must now notice:

ii) The punishment involved

That is exactly what Paul calls it in 2Cor.2.6; "Sufficient to such an one is this punishment, which was inflicted of many". In this present chapter, Paul puts it as follows: "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus". Notice:

a) "*To deliver such an one to Satan*". This explains the implications of excommunication, or to use the language of v13, the act of 'putting away' from assembly fellowship. (We will see exactly what this involves in v11). To "deliver such an one to Satan" is to deprive them of assembly fellowship, so that they find themselves in the world, without the spiritual benefits provided by the assembly, and where they are subject to Satan's taunts and accusations. The *assembly* is the place of the Lord's presence and blessing. It is not (or at least, it should not be) the sphere of Satan's activity. *The world* is the sphere of Satan's power. He is the "God of this world". John tells us that "the whole world lieth in wickedness (JND 'the wicked one')". He is "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience". The guilty party is therefore deprived of the benefits inherent in assembly fellowship, and exposed to Satan's malign attention. The words, "to deliver such an one to Satan" can be understood with reference to the Lord's words to Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he might sift (winnow) you as wheat", Luke 22.31. But such discipline is not an end in itself. It is intended to produce repentance, and desire for restoration. Which brings us to:

iii) The purpose involved

This is stated as follows: "For the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus". We must notice the two contrasting expressions:

a) "*for the destruction of the flesh*". This refers to the old sinful nature, and emphasises the *negative* purpose of assembly discipline. It is to destroy the

activity of the sinful nature. The immense loss of spiritual privilege and blessing is intended to emphasise the awfulness of sin, to the extent that the person turns from it with loathing and disgust. The Greek word (*'olethros'*) rendered "destruction" does not mean loss of being, but loss of well-being. For further examples of its usage, see 1Thess.5.3, "Sudden destruction", and 2Thess.1.9, "Everlasting destruction". The purpose of discipline is to bring the person concerned to repentance. It is not physical death, but 'mortifying the deeds of the body', Rom.8.13. Compare Col.3.5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry".

b) *"That the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"*. This refers to the new spiritual life, and emphasises the *positive* purpose of assembly discipline. It has in view the guilty party's ultimate benefit and welfare. This is the sense of the words, "That the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus". The "day of the Lord Jesus" refers to the rapture and the judgment seat of Christ. See 1Cor.1.8,3.13, Phil.2.16 etc. So discipline is exercised in view of the person's appearance at the judgment seat of Christ. The word "saved" is not used here in the sense of eternal salvation, but in the context of reward. The purpose of assembly discipline is to ensure that in spite of the serious lapse, there will be something that will stand the test at the judgment seat of Christ.

3) WHY IS ASSEMBLY DISCIPLINE NECESSARY? V6-8

Paul ensures their attitude with the words, "Your glorying is not good", v6. This can hardly mean that they were actually boasting about the sin amongst them: it is more likely that they were boasting in the fact that they were not personally infected by such sin. But they *were* involved: "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the *whole* lump. That is, the whole assembly was affected. In two ways:

i) *The immorality could spread*. The toleration of licentious behaviour by one person could encourage others to follow suit, especially as no action had been taken to deal with the matter.

ii) *The entire testimony could be brought into disrepute*. In fact, this had already happened: hence the words, "it is reported commonly that there is fornication among you", v1.

Bearing in mind the corrupting power of leaven, even in small quantities, Paul alludes in v7-8 to the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread. They are never divided in scripture. See, for example, Deut.16.1-8, Mark 14.12, and Luke 22.1,7. Leaven is always a picture of evil in the Bible, including Matt.13.33. It was to be totally excluded at Passover time. See Ex.12.14-20 and Deut.16.1-4. The intimate connection between the two feasts teaches the important lesson that redeemed people must be a holy people. Hence the words, "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth". Please, remember that the words, "therefore let us keep the feast" (literally, 'let us keep festival'), do not refer to the Lord's supper, but to the moral reality foreshadowed by the feast of unleavened bread. The words have been rendered, "Let your whole life

be a sacred festival'. Paul puts it like this: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works", Titus 1.13-14. See also 1Pet.1.17-19, "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ".

Note: they were to be unleavened practically: "purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump". They were already unleavened *positionally*: "even as ye are unleavened". We must always ensure that our practice corresponds with our position. The principle in this section is clear: evil will spread if tolerated. Compare Gal.5.9, where the same statement is made in a connection with false teaching.

4) WHO DOES ASSEMBLY DISCIPLINE INVOLVE? V9-13

"I wrote unto you in an epistle, not to company with fornicators", v9. The R.V. reads, 'I wrote unto you in my epistle to have no company with fornicators'. Compare JND, 'I have written to you in the epistle'. Paul is evidently referring to this present letter, perhaps to v5 of this very chapter. J. Heading (*First Epistle to the Corinthians*) cites H.P.V. Nunn who suggests that this is a case of the 'epistolary aorist'. That is, the writer puts himself in the place of the readers, and describes as past an action present to himself, but which will be past to his readers once they receive his letter. (That needs a little thought!).

V10 contrasts with v11. Paul makes it clear in v10 that our very presence in the world obliges us to rub shoulders with sinful men and women "of this world". The only alternative is to "go out of the world". But he makes it equally clear, in v11, that we are to disassociate ourselves with "any man that is called a *brother*" who is guilty of the sins enumerated. With such a person, the assembly was "not to keep company", and "not to eat". The latter has been sadly misapplied by some today. But the teaching is clear: there is to be no social contact. Compare Matt.18.17, "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican". This might seem harsh and extreme at first glance, but the enormity of the sin involved is not likely to be impressed on the guilty party if life goes on exactly as it did before. The withdrawal of social contact is to drive home guilt, which will in turn lead to repentance.

This does not mean that the home of the guilty person should never be visited. After all, there might be other saved members of the family, and in any case elders need, if possible, to be in contact with people who have been 'put away' from assembly fellowship in order to monitor their attitude and look for evidence of repentance. But let us make it very clear, that this is quite different from social contact.

Notice that the words, "For what have I to do to judge them that are without!" v12 correspond with v10, and the words, "Do not ye judge them that are within?" v12, correspond with v11. The saints have authority to deal with assembly matters. It is God's prerogative to deal with the world. The conclusion is given in v13: "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person". Assembly discipline is necessary because "the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are", 1Cor.3.1 7.

POSTSCRIPT

The Second Epistle makes clear that the action taken by the assembly acted on the guidance given in 1Cor.5, “Ye sorrowed after a godly sort . . . in all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter”, 7.11.

It also makes clear that the action taken by the assembly, as a result of apostolic guidance, was effective so far as the man himself was concerned: “Sufficient unto such a man is this punishment which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow”, 2Cor.2.6-7. But note that this raised a further problem. The assembly had been slow to put away from fellowship: now it was slow in restoring to fellowship. Hence v8-11, “Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him . . . lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices”.
—*to be continued (D.V.)*

“AND THE NAME OF THE DAUGHTER OF ASHER WAS SARAH” —Num.26.46

by David Ogden (Luton, England)

PAPER 1

The Holy Spirit has given us the names of over 150 women in scripture. Some of these are for ever enshrined in the ‘Hall of Spiritual Fame’; worthy holders of the title “a virtuous woman”, with much said about them. They would feature strongly in any list of well known biblical characters. Conversely, others stand as monuments of iniquity and shame. There is a second group of women. This comprises those of whom less is said, yet merit some record of their deeds either to approbation or condemnation. Rhoda in Acts 12 is one such. It was once written of her thus, “God, who leaves in oblivion, names of mighty conquerors, treasurers up that of a poor girl for His church in all ages”. Leaving aside the unnamed women, there is a third class, those mentioned but with no details given. This is the most numerous, but nothing is given of them apart from their names and sometimes their ancestry. No loving act of worship is recorded, nor deed of kindness. They feature in no great event, they make no spectacular marriage nor give birth to a noted man of God, occasionally, as in the case of the wives of the kings of Judah, their children are noteworthy, but in general they are totally unknown and obscure. Yet God thought fit to mention their names in His Divine revelation, He who cares for sparrows takes note of the least of His people.

Such an example of the latter class is Sarah the daughter of Asher, Num.26.45. We know the names of her father and brothers, she has a distinguished ancestry and kin, but of the lady herself, nothing is known. She is listed three times in the Old Testament, all with reference to the children of Asher in the tribal records. She is the only female mentioned in the lists of Num.26, apart from Jochebed the daughter of

Levi, Miriam her daughter and the daughters of Zelophehad of the tribe of Manasseh: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. These seven women are included for known and special reasons. Jochebed is the mother of Aaron, Moses and Miriam. Miriam is listed with her brothers. The five daughters of Zelophehad are there because of the principle that God would establish, namely, that of the right of the female to inherit. That is of vital importance in the Lord's own genealogy and His moral and legal right to the throne. Num.36.1-12, Matt.1.16, Lk.3.23-38.

There is even some confusion as to whether Sarah is her correct name. In Gen.46.17, and 1Chron.7.30, the genealogy, reads "and the sons of Asher, . . . and Serah their sister, Sarah means Princess, Serah means Abundance. Her brothers have names of varying quality: Jimnah—Prosperity. Ishuah—Equal or Self Satisfied. Ishui—Equality. Beriah—Unfortunate or In Evil.

They may be comments on the fortunes of Asher at the time of his sons' birth. Her own name, open to conjecture, as has been observed, could reflect a proud father's hopes for his daughter, possibly naming her after her great-great-grandmother. The girl might have been called by both names during her life. It might be that, possibly as with some of her brothers, her name reflected an upsurge in the family status and fortunes.

What are the spiritual lessons to be learnt from such a seemingly obscure verse? Nothing is known of her life, she went into Egypt and enjoyed the blessings obtained because of family kinship with Joseph. She probably died before trial came upon the nation, whether she remained faithful to God in a foreign and sometimes hostile land with all its achievements and real distractions, we do not know. All the Holy Spirit records is, "and the name of the daughter of Asher was Sarah".

We are living in a time both materially and spiritually when the cry is that of Babel "let us make us a name", Gen.11.3. There is a danger of wanting and seeking material prosperity and spiritual position as a major objective, and sometimes as a guard against being thought a nonentity. Theudas boasted himself to be somebody, Acts 5.36. It has been well observed that, "only the truly humble are truly great and only truly great are truly humble". Paul exhorts us to; "look not on our own things but also on the things of others", Phil.2.4. The word for others in this verse is those of a different kind.

A situation can, however, arise in that we are expected, correctly, to give place, courtesy and consideration to fellow saints, yet sadly, there are some who would expect it yet never be prepared to reciprocate. May God grant that we be balanced and equable in our dealings with each other. We serve the Lord Christ and from Him alone comes praise, but Christian courtesy is sometimes a one sided and even neglected practice. There are of course those who will seek to disparage any one who tries to show an interest in the things of God, especially if they articulate them, and unfortunately this is sometimes the case of the behaviour of older saints to younger ones. There is a danger however, of an unconscious pride setting in when one is trying to exercise a gift. It is in Phil.2.5 that we are exhorted to remember the great example of the Lord Jesus, He who humbled Himself, 2.8.

Scripture abounds with examples of the person who is unnamed or who has a

single casual mention. These are often non-speaking characters in the great unfolding of God's redemptive work, unknown and yet playing an important part. The widow with her mite, the unnamed prophets of the Old Testament, the great company of saints in Romans 16.

Yet God treasures names, He who calls all the stars by names, Ps.147.5 and says "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine", Isa.43.1, is the same one who calls His sheep by name: who knows His sheep and is known of them, Jn.10.3.14, and who says, "Rejoice that your names are written in Heaven", Lk.10.20.

"My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart;
I know that while in Heaven He stands,
No tongue can bid me thence depart".

—to be continued (D.V.)

THE MIND OF CHRIST

by C. Jones (Cardiff, Wales)

PAPER 1

The Word of God gives us a wonderful insight into the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, the altogether lovely One, S.ofS.5.16. In Phil.2.5-11, the passage on which this article is based, we read, in words of sublime beauty and majesty comparable with the opening verses of Gen.1 and Jn.1, of the thoughts and deeds of the Lord which resulted in His leaving heaven, coming down to this earth, and dying on the Cross. He did all this thinking not of Himself but of the glory of God and so that sinners, who by the grace of God repent and accept Him as Lord and Saviour, might be saved, Eph.2.8-9. The great motivating force behind His coming was love to God and for lost sinners.

The Lord rose bodily from among the dead, 1Cor.15.3-4, ascended back to heaven, Acts.1.9 and is now "... set down at the right hand of the throne of God", Heb.12.2.

In Phil.2.5-11 we read of His eternal exaltation and of the glory which is and shall be His. The passage is both doctrinal and practical. It contains fundamental truths regarding the Deity of the Lord, His humility and voluntary humbling of Himself, His incarnation and His obedience to the will of God His Father. The passage stresses the need for believers not to live selfish, self-centred, self-assertive lives but to think of others and act for their temporal and eternal benefit, helping all to live in peace and unity.

The Philippians, and believers today, are exhorted to have the same attitudes and thoughts concerning others as the Lord has, Phil.2.5. The exhortation follows naturally from the thought in v4 where we are reminded not to be self-centred but to be concerned about the needs, problems and condition of others. This is the "mind" of Christ Jesus, who is ever and eternally the same, Heb.13.8. This was His

mind before His incarnation and ever will be.

The Lord is referred to as "Christ Jesus" in v5. Paul saw Him first as "Christ", the anointed One, the Messiah, a glorified Man in heaven, Acts 9.1-6. The name "Jesus" means "Jehovah the Saviour" and was the name given to Him at His birth in accordance with the angel's command, Matt.1.21, Lk.1.31,2.21. "Christ Jesus" tells of the one who is now exalted, who had been the Man Jesus down here on earth. The order "Jesus Christ", which is used in v11 makes us think of the One who was despised and rejected of men, who became acquainted with grief, Isa.53.3, but later ascended back to glory in heaven.

The eternal Deity of the Lord is stressed in v6 in that He eternally subsisted in the form of God. He is eternally God and never has, nor could, nor will ever cease to be what He always is. He is God, Jn.1.1-2 and in Jn.17.5 we read of the glory He had with the Father before the world was. He never changes, Mal.3.6 and He did not cease to be God when He came to earth, delighting to do the Father's will, Ps.40.7-8. In v6 we read that He "... thought it not robbery to be equal with God". He did not consider His position of equality with God in heaven a prize to be grasped at or held fast but was prepared voluntarily to make Himself of no reputation, to empty Himself. It is not a question of what He emptied Himself of, but what He emptied Himself into. He could not be emptied of that which was His essentially and eternally, but He who was God became Man and Deity was emptied into humanity without a drop being lost. He took upon Himself the form of a servant, Phil.2.7, that is a bondservant. He was God's perfect Servant, Isa.42.1, as we see Him depicted in Mark's Gospel. He emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant but He was always Lord, speaking and teaching with Divine authority and revealing the power of God in His deeds. He was humble and prepared to take the lowest place as when He washed the disciples' feet, Jn.13.5. He came "... not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many". Mk.10.45. He said to His disciples "... I am among you as He that serveth", Lk.22.27.

He "was made in the likeness of men", v7. He became a man, in a body prepared for Him, Heb.10.5, a perfect Man, as we see Him depicted in Luke's Gospel. As Man He experienced tiredness and pain, but He was always God, as we see Him depicted in John's Gospel. Thus, being a Man, He understands our feelings and can be, and is, a merciful and faithful High Priest, Heb.2.16-18. He was a Man, Rom.5.15, 1Cor.15.21, 1Tim.2.5, and yet He did not lay aside the attributes of God. He was like us in every way, sin apart, Heb.4.15. He came "... in the likeness of sinful flesh ..." Rom.8.3 but He knew no sin, 2Cor.5.21, did no sin, 1Pet.2.22, there is no sin in Him, 1Jn.3.5, indeed, being God, He is holy and cannot sin. In Jn.1.14 we read "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth".

His glory was veiled except when He was transfigured and His glory shone through, Matt.17.2, Mk.9.2, Lk.9.29. His words and deeds revealed the power of God for "Never man spake like this Man", Jn.7.46, and no man could do the miracles He did "... except God be with Him", Jn.3.2. Peter was led to say "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God". Matt.16.16, and the demon said "I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God". Mk.1.24, Lk.4.34.

—to be continued (D.V.)

THE GARMENTS OF THE LORD

by D. M. Clark (Canada)

PAPER 1

Ps.45.8: "All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad".

As we have opportunity to study the garments of the Lord may the gladness, of which this verse speaks, be ours.

SWADDLING CLOTHES

Lk.2.7: "And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn". The birth of the child Jesus shows the condescension of the Lord of Glory as He became like His creatures, save that He had a sinless nature. How great the act of "humbling Himself"—signified by the swaddling clothes. He became a partaker of our humanity, sin apart. Heb.2.14, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; . . ."

The magnitude of the step that the Lord took from "the glory that He had with the Father", Jn.17.5, to the manger in Bethlehem, cannot be measured in human terms. It is utterly beyond our comprehension that the Son of God should also become the Son of Man. It draws out our wonder and admiration.

What was His purpose in becoming a part of the human race? It permitted Him to enter into our circumstances and to have perfect empathy with us in the difficulties through which we pass. He felt, more completely than we could, the trials and sorrows of life. When He entered into the sorrow that Mary and Martha had on the death of Lazarus, He wept. When He sat by Samaria's well He was weary and thirsty. He was truly a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief", Isa. 53.3. As such He was qualified to become our Intercessor, Heb.4.15, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin".

Moreover, He became a Man so that He might die. He was not subject to death, for He was sinless. We are sinful, death is our just due. He alone could be our Deliverer—the "offering for sin", of which Isaiah prophesied.

Is.53.10, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand"; and v12, ". . . He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors".

THE SERVANT'S TOWEL

Jn.13.4, "He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself".

W. E. Vine tells us that the towel used by the Lord "was commonly used by servants in a household". Hence, by so girding Himself, our Lord took the place of

a servant (literally a slave), Phil.2.7, “But emptied Himself, taking a bondman’s form, taking His place in the likeness of men”. (J.N.D. trans.).

Not only did He come into the human race as a Man but He also took upon Himself the service of a slave. Here is the One who is “The Lord of glory”, placing Himself at the feet of the disciples to carry out the role of a bondman, Lk.22.27, “. . . I am among you as He that serveth”.

Self loves to be served but love loves to serve. The Lord Jesus demonstrated the love of God in serving His creatures. This is an example for us, Jn.13.15, “For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you”. In the perfection of the Manhood of the Lord Jesus, we see how miserably we have failed. It is no marvel then, that at the Jordan, when Jesus was baptised of John, the Father declared “This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight”, Matt.3.17, (J.N.D.).

When we become believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we become His servants, 1Cor.7.22, “. . . the freeman being called is Christ’s bondman”. True liberty is not to do our own will but to gladly seek and do His will. Gal.5.13, “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another”. These scriptural exhortations should challenge us to manifest, in our lives, the example that Christ has given us.

We have the constant reminder of 1Cor.6.19-20, “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body”. Also, Rom.12.1, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”.

The Lord Jesus paid a great price for our redemption, therefore we should welcome the opportunity to serve Him as His willing bondservants. 1Cor.7.22-23, “For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ’s servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men”.

GLISTERING GARMENTS

Lk.9.28-29, “And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering . . . and there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him”.

The future glory of the Lord Jesus was revealed, to the disciples, in that scene on the mountain. His garments speak of the glory into which He has now entered as the exalted Son of Man, having completed His work on earth. When speaking of that glory, we are reminded of Phil.2.8-11, “And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”.

That preview of His glory was given to encourage the disciples in view of His pending death. Sadly, it seems that not until after His death did these things come to mind again. However, Peter tells of that occasion, 2Pet.1.17-19, "For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts". May the anticipation of the Lord's return, in glory, fix our affection upon Himself, so that we say, "Even so, come Lord Jesus".

A GARMENT OF DERISION

Matt.27.28-29, "And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews"!

Jn.19.2, "And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe," . . . v5, "Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man"!

Having become a Man, to reveal God's heart of love toward man, and having served man in meeting his physical needs, He now becomes the focus of man's derision. This leads, of course, to the Lord meeting our greatest need, that of salvation.

The world mocked the Lord Jesus and placed about Him a robe that was intended to ridicule His claim to be the King of the Jews, Matthew calls it a scarlet robe, which is the colour associated with the Jews, to whom he was writing. John, on the other hand, refers to it as a purple robe, that colour is associated with the Gentile world. So, both Jew and Gentile, all stand guilty of having denied the Lord his rightful place.

Exodus 39.24, "And they made upon the hems of the robe pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and twined linen". The priestly garment, referred to here, includes both colours reminding us that the Lord can meet the need of Jew and Gentile as Priest. He will also exercise priestly judgment over all the peoples of the world.

The role of the priest was not only to offer sacrifices, but also to render judgments on legal and moral matters for the people. Deut.17.8-10, "If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment. . . then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose; and thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgment".

Though our blessed Lord stood before Pilate to be judged, the day is coming when Pilate will stand before the Lord Jesus to be judged, as will all the ungodly of this world. Jn.5.22, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son", and Jude v15, "To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him".

HIS TRADITIONAL GARMENTS

Jn.19.23, "Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout".

When the soldiers crucified Jesus they took His garments, (himation, in the plural) His outer garments, and the coat, the chiton, the inner garment, which was woven from the top throughout. The outer garments were easily divisible among the four soldiers, but they could not divide the chiton without splitting it, so they cast lots for it.—W. E. Vine Expository Dictionary—Thus fulfilling Ps.22.18, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture".

This is how Delitzsch describes the garments of the Lord: "On His head He wore a white 'sudar', fastened under the chin and hanging down from the shoulders. Over the tunic, (chiton) which covered the body to the hands and feet, a blue 'tallith' with the blue and white fringes on the four ends, so thrown over and gathered together that the grey, red-striped undergarment was scarcely noticeable, except when the sandal-shod feet came into view".

The Lord's clothing would identify Him as a Jew, which is in keeping with His relationship with Israel. It was not ostentatious, but the garb of the ordinary man. He did not wear the clothing of a King, as they expected the Messiah would.

The body-coat was different, being made without seam, to remind us of His perfect humanity. There was nothing that ever marred His human perfection, though He was tempted in all points like as we, sin apart, Heb.4.15.

—to be continued (D.V.)

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP

(Comments by C. H. Spurgeon)

We should like to see all the pipes in our Nonconformist places of worship either ripped open or compactly filled with concrete. The human voice is so transcendently superior to all that wind or strings can accomplish, that it is a shame to degrade its harmonies by association with blowing and scraping. It is not better music which we get from organs and viols, but inferior sounds, which unsophisticated ears judge to be harsh and meaningless when compared with a melodious human voice. That the great Lord cares to be praised by bellows we very gravely question; we cannot see any connection between the glory of God and sounds produced by machinery. One broken note from a grateful heart must have more real acceptable praise in it than all the wind which sweeps through whistling pipes. Instrumental music, with its flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of noise makers, was no doubt well suited to the worship of the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar, the king, had set up, and harps and trumpets served well the infant estate of things under the law, but in the Gospel's spiritual domain these may well be let go with all other beggarly elements.

What a degradation to supplant the intelligent song of the whole congregation by the theatrical prettiness of a quartette, the refined niceties of a choir or the blowing of wind from inanimate bellows and pipes. We might as well pray by machinery as praise by it.

CONFIDENTLY SECURE

by W. W. Orbinson (Rugby, England)

The great theme of Paul's letter to the Romans is "the gospel of God, . . . concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord", Rom.1.1-3. A greater message has never reached human ears.

Paul proves the guilt of all mankind in the first three chapters and then teaches the truth of justification by faith alone in ch.4. In ch.5 the results of justification are described, peace with God; a standing before Him; the love of God in our hearts; the gift of the Holy Spirit; reconciliation; eternal life etc. We may wonder is this all true and incontrovertible?

Ch.8 is where we find the truth that we are secure and can be confident of this security. There is no condemnation, v1; no accusation, v33; no separation, v39. In this godless environment there is much to cause grief and anguish, suffering and pain. Paul spoke in his day, "We were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears", 2Cor.7.5. The believer may experience "tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword", Rom.8.35. Paul seems to use almost every conceivable description to impress upon us the tremendous forces that are against us. He then goes to more powerful foes, "death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth", and lest any are missed out he concludes with, "any other creature".

Does all this make the believer tremble and lose heart? "Nay", he says, "in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that, nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord".

I've found a Friend—oh, such a Friend!
He loved me ere I knew Him;
He drew me with the cords of love;
And thus He bound me to Him;
And round my heart still closely twine
Those bands which nought can sever;
For I am His and He is mine
For ever and for ever.

With this confidence we look forward to the day when 'caught up together to meet the Lord in the air' and with bodies 'like unto His glorious body', we shall 'ever be with the Lord'. MARANATHA.

Though God knows all our sins yet He would hear them from us. He requires from us an honest confession of them—not that He might be informed but that we might be humbled.

Donald Ross.

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (51)

by John Grant (Scotland)

From an early age I was made aware of the need of salvation. My father had been an active member of the Communist Party and was saved when thirty years of age. My mother had been brought up in the gospel missions around the Glasgow area and after their marriage they moved near to the village of Bridge of Weir, to work at Quarrier's Homes, a village home for orphans and other needy children.

The church which they attended often had gospel preachers present and there were impressions made on my young mind that I was a sinner and needed the Saviour. When I was eight years of age I felt the conviction of sin, and can recall clearly one Wednesday evening praying for salvation and writing into the fly leaf of a Bible: 'Lord, I want to be saved'. That night I was saved. This Bible was missing for years and it was a great delight to uncover it a few years ago when cleaning out an attic. There the words were, written in a young faltering hand, but bringing back clearly the night when salvation came into my life.

When I reached my early teens I applied for membership of the "church" and attended the courses which had to be completed before membership was granted. I then took an active part, particularly among the young people, and eventually became the leader of the youth work. All gospel preachers were welcome, male and female, and I encouraged as many as possible to come and hear the gospel.

At this time one of my friends enquired if I had ever considered baptism. I answered that I considered myself to be baptised as my birth certificate bore an impressive stamp which gave the date of my baptism as being when I was six weeks old. The question, however, prompted my interest and I turned to the word of God to see if my friend was correct in what he was telling me about baptism. I fought what I read for some months, but eventually had to confess that I was not baptised, and that I should be as soon as possible. Where, however, should I be baptised? I started to look and was surprised that others in the church did not have sympathy with what I was doing. At last I came upon believers in the town of Paisley who did baptise. They were in a large gospel mission and I was baptised there in the autumn of 1959.

This whole incident had unsettled me in the place which I attended. I already had serious disagreements with others over the question of whether the scriptures were literally true, or were simply allegories and fables. The minister, who was a saved man, left in 1959, before I was baptised, and was replaced by one who showed little evidence of possessing eternal life. Shortly after his coming he asked me to apply to the local church football league to have the youth fellowship enrolled. I refused to do this, telling him that I did not think this a fit thing for believers to do. One week later he told me that he had completed the application papers himself and that the first football game was to be played some two weeks hence. After much discussion he persuaded me to go along. I was not part of the team, but I walked round the

pitch, listened to the language of the players, who professed to be believers, and decided there that I could no longer remain associated with this “church”.

I then set off to find a suitable spiritual home. I knew nothing of assembly truth or even of the existence of assemblies. I went to the neighbouring village of Kilmacolm and found a Gospel Hall there with a gospel meeting advertised for the following Lord's Day, so I determined to attend. The young man at the door welcomed me warmly and as the meeting progressed I felt, for the first time, that I had found Christians who really did believe the Bible. I was invited for supper after the meeting, and well remember at the end of the evening asking if they believed that there literally was a place called the Garden of Eden. The answer was ‘yes’. I then asked: ‘Do you believe there was literally a man called Adam, and that the opening chapters of the Bible are not simply a fable?’ The answer was ‘yes’. On hearing that, my heart leaped. Here were believers who believed the Bible and I felt at home among them. I promised to return.

This home became open to me, and over the months that followed I learned truth which I had never heard before. How I value those evenings spent in that home. There was not a great deal of this world's goods, but there was a genuine warm love for the Lord and a desire to help a young man who knew so little of the scriptures. I was taught what an assembly was and taken to hear the ministry of the word. This was a whole new world to me and I was amazed and delighted at the wealth of teaching which I was receiving. I learned that the church was not a building, but believers. I learned the place of sisters in the local church. I learned the truth of the breaking of bread, the prayers etc. What a vista opened to my view. Young believer, value the assembly and do not underestimate the wealth of teaching and help which is to be found at the gatherings of the Lord's people. For me it was like coming from a parched wilderness into the land flowing with milk and honey. In late September 1960 I asked to be received into fellowship and broke bread for the first time on the first Lord's Day of October. Many years later I still thank Him for the gracious way in which He led me to the assembly. What would I have missed in life if I had turned my back on it!

The years passed and the Lord gave me a good wife who has always been supportive of the work of the Lord. He also gave us three sons and one daughter and there were years spent bringing them up. As time passed we had an increasing desire to serve the Lord in a full time way, but there was never the sense that it should be now. In December 1989 Robert McPheat was speaking at the commendation meeting for Malcolm Radcliffe and what he had to say spoke loudly to my wife and me. The issues which had been before us were addressed powerfully by Robert and we sensed that the Lord was calling. At that time I was in the computer business and it did not seem likely that I could leave my business readily. We left this with the Lord and in a remarkable way He provided the answer to us in September 1990. The assembly in Bridge of Weir gave their commendation in January 1991 to the full time work of preaching the gospel and ministering the word of God.

Looking back we can say truly ‘Ebenezer’, hitherto hath the Lord helped us. His is all the glory and we are thankful for His gracious hand with us down through the years.

Good Tidings from Heaven

YOU NEED NOT DIE

It is likely that every person at some time ponders the great question of death and the hereafter. As we consider our bodies and see them declining with the advancement of years, the things we used to do we can do no longer; the strength slowly leaves our limbs and we realise we are not on earth for ever. We have no alternative but concur with the Bible, "For we must needs die," 2Sam.14:14. Death is an appointment, "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," Heb.9:27. It is also true that as we look back over life the years have passed so quickly and we again agree with the Scriptural statements, Job7:6, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle"; James 4:14, "For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

Why is death an undeniable reality? The Bible gives an unmistakeably clear answer. Rom.5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"; Rom.6:23, "the wages of sin *is* death"; James 1:15, "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death"; 1Cor.15:21, "by man *came* death". These quotations teach that death is the result of sin. The implication is obvious — if you die it is because you are a sinner. To die with your sins unforgiven means that you will experience the second death. The first death is physical and to do with time but the second death is spiritual and to do with eternity. Rev.20:14, "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire". Rev.21:8, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death". What a fearful prospect and yet it is that of all who do not believe the gospel. Dear reader, where will you be for all eternity?

However, this page is entitled "YOU NEED NOT DIE!" What is the answer to death? It is obvious, it is life, but not physical life, rather eternal life. This can come from God alone and is given as a free gift to all who wish to have it. Again we turn to the Bible, John 3:14, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life". Nothing could be clearer. God gave His Son to die that mankind might not die. He, on the cross of Calvary bore the judgment of God against our sins that we might have eternal life. It may seem all too easy, but that just magnifies the grace of God. We can finish a quotation begun above, Rom.6:23, "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord". We receive confirmation that we have this eternal life from the Bible, 1John.5:13, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life".

The Lord Jesus has promised to return for all who have believed in Him and when He comes, all the living believers will go directly to heaven without dying. John.11:26, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die". Have you this comforting and glorious prospect?



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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Advisory Editor : A. M. S. Gooding

Editor: B. Currie

Correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to:

The Editor, 49 Glenburn Road, Dunmurry, N. Ireland, BT17 9AN.
Telephone (01232) 621343.

Secretary/Treasurer : William Neill, 109 Lurgan Road,
Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.
Telephone (018206) 24238.

Committee : Tom Armstrong, Thomas Beggs, Ronnie Johnston,
James McKeown, James Moore, Roy Reynolds.

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John Glenville, 16 Trelawney Road, Saltash, Cornwall, PL12 4DD.
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BEHOLD YOUR KING

(Meditations in Matthew)

by Jim Flanigan (Belfast)

14. Further Miracles (Ch. 9)

Half of the 20 miracles recorded in Matthew's Gospel are in chapters 8 and 9. The King was moving in power in the midst of a sad and sick humanity. It was not only power, there was compassion and tenderness too, as He entered into human sorrow. He calmed their fevers, cured their leprosy, delivered from demonism, opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, loosened the tongues of the dumb, and even raised the dead. For Israel it was Psalm 103.3 — "Who healeth all thy diseases".

From the country of the Gadarenes the Saviour came back across the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum. Capernaum had now become "His own city". He had gone to live there after His rejection at Nazareth (ch.4.13). What privileged cities were these. They were indeed seeing the powers of the world to come (Heb. 6.5). They carried to Him, there at Capernaum, a man paralysed, sick of the palsy. Mark tells the story most graphically. The people thronged the entrance to the crowded house, but the friends of the palsied man were not easily deterred. They ascended the outer stone staircase to the roof, broke up the tiling, and lowered their sick friend to the feet of the Saviour, who first pronounced forgiveness of the man's sins. Sin was a greater problem than the palsy. He then challenged the hypocrisy and unbelief of the scribes. Which was easier to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee", or "Arise and walk"? The former, of course, was easier to say, for who then could see or tell or know whether sins had been forgiven or not? "Arise and walk" was a different matter. Men would wait and watch and know whether or not some power had been imparted to the paralysed man. There was power. The man arose at the Saviour's word and departed to his house as the people marvelled and glorified God.

The call of Matthew follows. Of this we have spoken before in an earlier introductory paper. It was a simple call, "Follow Me". There was an immediate, unquestioning response, "He arose and followed Him". Matthew is Levi. Little did he know on that memorable day, that he, a poor despised publican, was to become the biographer of the King of Israel, and give to succeeding generations the first Gospel of the New Testament, the royal, regal, "Gospel according to Matthew". The young believer, and every believer, should take courage from this. Who can tell what God may have in mind for us to do when He calls us by His grace? Matthew prepared a meal for the Saviour and in bold testimony invited many of his old associates, publicans and sinners, to meet his new Master and Lord. It is the sick who need the Physician, Jesus tells the critics. These Pharisees had much to learn both about mercy and true righteousness.

The disciples of John the Baptist then had a problem about fasting. The disciples of Jesus apparently did not fast as John's disciples and the Pharisees did. Why was this? It was not the time for fasting, Jesus replies. His disciples could not mourn while He was with them. But He would one day be taken from them, He would be rejected, and then, in the days of His rejection, His followers would deny themselves

the pursuits and pleasures of the men of the earth. Then again, there was a new thing being introduced which would not mix with the ceremonial ritual of old Judaism. It would be like new cloth patched on an old garment, or like new wine poured into old skin bottles. It would never do. New wine must have new bottles. Jesus was bringing in a new order of things which would displace and replace and supercede Judaism. It would be entirely new.

While He was explaining all this, Jairus came. He was a ruler of the synagogue. His little 12-year-old girl was dying, even now already dead. Would the Saviour come? Of course He would. He arose with His disciples and followed after Jairus. But on His mission of mercy there was an interruption. A woman, whose very life had been haemorrhaging away since Jairus's daughter had been born came through the crowd to touch Him. For 12 years she had been ill. Human physicians had failed her. She had spent all. Her touch was a touch of faith upon the hem of His garment. All His garments are fragrant with myrrh and aloes, and the healing cassia (Psalm 45.8). The Saviour took time to speak words of comfort and assurance to the woman who was instantly healed by her touch of faith. It was an interlude of grace and the company then proceeded to the ruler's house.

The minstrels were there, with their music and noise. He put them all out, mockers, mourners, minstrels and all. There is no room for earthly clamour when God is about to work. They had laughed Him to scorn, but in a holy calm He takes the little maid by the hand, lifts her out from the grasp of death, and His fame is spread abroad.

Two blind men now follow Him imploringly. Blindness has ever been a sad problem in Israel. "Son of David", they cry, "have mercy on us". They followed Him into the house. He challenges them if they have faith in His ability to heal them and in a simple faith they answer, "Yea Lord". As the woman had earlier touched Him, so now He touches them and in accordance with their faith their eyes are opened.

There now comes to Him a man dumb and demon possessed. How much demon possession there was in Galilee. When the demon was cast out the people marvel, but still the Pharisees are critical. They blasphemously attribute His works to the Prince of demons. Later He will tell them that this is the unpardonable sin, (ch.12.24-32). They attribute the work of God to the Devil. In a future day, when the man of sin is revealed with his deceptions, they will attribute the work of the Devil to God. Oh the perversity of man in his unbelief.

Our Lord continues His busy ministry, travelling, preaching, teaching, healing, praying. Through cities and villages He moves in grace, teaching in their synagogues and ministering to their sick with compassion. "Moved with compassion" is, in the original text, one word. His whole being was moved emotionally, compassionately, as He saw the multitudes. In His teaching the Saviour expounded His message. In His preaching He applied it. In healing He illustrated it. But while the harvest was great and plenteous the labourers were few. It is still the same, "Pray", He urges. "Pray the Lord of the harvest that He would thrust forth labourers into His harvest. Note that it is His harvest, not ours. It is His prerogative to send. It is ours to hear His voice and move in obedience when and where He directs. It is a high privilege to be workers together, under God, in the gathering in of the lost and the gathering together of the saved.

—to be continued (D.V.)

Assembly Testimony Bible Class

by J. Riddle (Cheshunt)

The Church and the Churches

(21) Head Coverings (1) — *Read 1 Corinthians 11.2-16*

In the next two papers, we are going to investigate the question of head-coverings in assembly gatherings. To many professing Christians, this is regarded as non-essential. We are told that ‘as long as the heart is right, the question of a head-covering is really quite unimportant. A piece of material on a sister’s head doesn’t make any difference to her at all’. This teaching has been accepted wholesale in some places, and has almost inevitably led to further retrograde changes. Of course it is important that the heart should be right and when this is the case, biblical teaching on the subject will be gladly recognised and practised. After all, we should all count it a great privilege, whether brothers or sisters, to confess the headship of Christ. If there has been some kind of change, and the headship of Christ has been withdrawn or lost, we might have some reason for ignoring New Testament teaching on the subject. The very suggestion brings its own refutation! The Holy Spirit deals with the subject in 1Cor.11. This chapter divides into two sections. In v2-16, Paul deals with the Headship of Christ, and the section commences, “Now I praise you”. The subject is developed with particular reference to public participation in assembly gatherings. In v17-34, Paul deals with the Lordship of Christ, and the section commences, “Now I praise you not”. The subject is developed with particular reference to the Lord’s supper. In this study, we are particularly concerned with the apostolic teaching in v2-16.

It is noteworthy that the passage commences with the words, “Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you”. We should notice Paul’s commendation before censure. That always makes censure more acceptable.

Paul’s teaching on the subject arose out of irregular practices in the assembly of Corinth. The words, “But I would have you know”, introduce a matter where deficiency existed. Paul refers to this in v4-5: “Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head”. We must notice that there were two irregularities.

- (i) Sisters were present in assembly gatherings with uncovered heads, and
- (ii) they were participating audibly.

Paul deals with the first irregularity in this chapter, and the second irregularity in ch.14, which deals with the entire question of audible participation in assembly gatherings. We will see why Paul deals with the problems in this particular order later in our study.

Paul deals with the question of head-coverings in the assembly in four ways. He

points out that the uncovered head of a sister, and for that matter, the covered head of a brother, is:

- (1) Contrary to divine principle, v3-6;
- (2) Contrary to creatorial precedent, v7-12;
- (3) Contrary to spiritual propriety, v13-15;
- (4) Contrary to apostolic practice, v16.

(1) IT IS CONTRARY TO DIVINE PRINCIPLE, v3-6

In the first place, Paul establishes the *principle* of headship, v3, and then he explains the *violation* of headship, v4-6.

A) The principle of headship, v3

“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God”. This verse describes a series of graded headships, culminating with the words, “the head of Christ is God”. It might be helpful to deal with this first:

i) ***“The head of Christ is God”***. This emphasises two most important aspects of the subject. Firstly, that the principle of headship operates between divine Persons and, secondly, arising from this, that the principle of headship involves relationship, *not* inequality. The words, “the head of Christ is God”, have particular reference to His manhood where, without for one moment resigning His absolute deity, the Lord Jesus was willingly subject to the will of God. Witness the following. “Then said He, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God”, Heb.10.9; “I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me”, John 5.30; “O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt”, Matt.26.39. See also Phil.2.6-8. Turning to the future, “And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject to Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all”, 1Cor.15.28. Notice that Eph.5 links headship with subjection.

ii) ***“The head of every man is Christ”***. This emphasises the authority of Christ in relation to the man. When the Lord Jesus was here, He prayed, “I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do”. The Lord Jesus lived and died for the honour and glory of God. Every man in the assembly should bring honour and glory to Christ by subjection to Him. Men should therefore be marked by dignity and reverential awe. There should be nothing frivolous about their behaviour. They must act at all times with reference to His authority. They are responsible to Christ, and the relationship between Christ and God constitutes the pattern of this recognition. Headship involves devotion and love: it is not rigid tyranny.

iii) ***“The head of the woman is the man”***. This does not mean that the woman is not subject to Christ in the same degree as the man, but that she shows her subjection to Christ in her subjection to the man in the assembly. The woman does this by acknowledging that God has ordained that the man should be *directly* responsible to Christ in the assembly, whereas the woman is *indirectly* responsible to Him. Please remember that this passage does not infer either the superiority of the man, or the inferiority of the woman: it teaches that men and women, whilst equally important,

have differing roles.

But where and how is this headship displayed? The answer is delightfully simple: both men and women display the headship of Christ in their heads! This brings us to:

B) The violation of headship, v4-6

i) As to the man. “Every man praying (Godward) or prophesying (manward), having his head covered, dishonoureth (the word means ‘to disgrace’ or ‘put to shame’) his head”. Whilst it is true that a man praying whilst wearing a hat would disgrace himself by acting inconsistently with his station, it is even more serious than that. He is dishonouring Christ, ‘In so doing, he dishonours Christ by taking from Him the honour due to Him as the head of the man’. (J. Hunter, *‘What the Bible Teaches’: 1Cor.*). The uncovered head symbolically displays the glory of Christ. The principle is expressed in v7: “For a man ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God”. In the assembly, the man’s head is a symbol of Christ. “The head of every man is Christ”. Therefore, if a man covers his head, he veils Christ’s authority: and that is a disgrace.

ii) As to the woman. “But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head”. This must be understood with reference to the statement that “the head of the woman is the man”. An uncovered woman praying or prophesying in the assembly at Corinth dishonoured the man by displaying *his* glory. After all, “the woman is the glory of the man”, v7, and that glory must be covered. Christ’s glory alone must be seen in the assembly. Rightly understood, v4-5 have nothing to do with local customs, or with ‘brethren traditions’, but everything to do with the glory of Christ.

At this point, we ought to address two conclusions which have been wrongly drawn from these verses:

i) The public participation by sisters in the assembly is permissible as long as they are covered. After all, Paul does say, ‘Every woman praying or prophesying’, JND. Whilst it could be argued that silent prayer is in view, that certainly could not be said of prophesying! The answer lies with the fact that Paul deals specifically with headship in 1Cor.11, whereas he deals with the subject of headship *first*, because once this is rightly understood, there can be no question of sisters taking audible part. Recognition of the man’s headship settles *both* questions. The woman is subject to the man. In any case, there can be no possible collision between 1Cor.11.4-5, and 1Cor.14.34-35, 1Tim.2.8, and 1Tim.2.11-12.

ii) That the covering mentioned in this chapter is actually the woman’s hair. Her hair, we are told, is a covering anyway, and therefore there is no need for anything further: v15 is cited in support of this argument. A little thought will show that this conclusion must be wrong. If the covering in v15 and v6 are one and the same, we have some very strange teaching indeed “If the woman be not covered (that is, has no hair), let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven (having no hair in the first place), let her be covered (either grow her hair, or wear a wig)”. We don’t even have to study the different Greek words here to see the inconsistency of the gainsayers! Paul’s argument is very clear indeed: either a woman

has her head covered in two ways, or not at all. Her *first* covering is her long hair: this is her natural glory, which was bestowed on womanhood at creation, v15. The *second* covering, to be worn during assembly gatherings, is an artificial covering. In the western world, this usually takes the form of a hat, but we must be careful not to lay down hard and fast rules about the precise nature of this head-covering. J Heading (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*) points out that ‘although such creation glory is for the pleasure of God in its rightful place, Rev.4.11, yet in spiritual service even the best and most legitimate things of the flesh (and we do not use this term in any derogatory sense) are out of place. The hair, then, must either be covered or removed. Now God is not unreasonable in His holy demands, so He insists upon the covering of the hair and not its removal. This would avoid natural shame and embarrassment, and would of course permit the woman’s glory to be manifested in its proper sphere’. It is worth adding that throughout the passage, Paul refers to the covered or uncovered *head* of the woman, rather than her covered or uncovered *hair*.

There are therefore two clear alternatives in v6: either “let her also be shorn” or, “let her be covered”. To preserve her glory as a woman, and at the same time to honour the man, she must cover her glory. We should also notice that it is not a question of husbands and wives here. The principle of headship does, of course, apply to marital relationships, see Eph.5.22-25. But here it is not “head of the *wife*”: it is *men* and *women*. The argument that if a woman wears a wedding ring, then she need not wear a hat, will not stand the light of Holy Scripture. Neither, for that matter, will the argument based on Gal.3.28, where Paul states, amongst other things, that “there is neither male or female”. This passage refers to our standing in Christ, not to the local assembly. It is so important to interpret scripture in context.

—to be continued (D.V.)

MEN OF GENESIS

by J. E. Todd, England

4. Abraham and his altars

We have noted that in the book of Genesis the lives of many men of God centre around a single feature. In the case of Abraham it was his altars.

An altar is a means of worshipping God by an offering. The five altars of Abraham illustrate five ways of worshipping God.

The Altar of the Covenant

God made a threefold covenant with Abram, First, his descendants were to become a great nation, “I will make of thee a great nation”, Gen.12.2, which was the Israelites and later known as the Jews. Second, by that nation to bring a great blessing to all mankind, “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed”, v3. That blessing is the gospel, ‘The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abram, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed’, Gal.3.8. Third, the nation of Israel to dwell in a great land,

“Unto thy seed will I give this land”, v7, that is the promised land of Canaan. Immediately, Abram built an altar, ‘There builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him’, v7. This was Abram’s act of acceptance of the covenant, the outward expression of his inward faith, ‘He believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness’, Gen.15.16.

Here begins our true worship of God, when by faith we accept the new covenant in the person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus said, “For this is My blood of the new testament (covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins”, Matt.26.28.

The Altar of Conduct

‘He (Abram) removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south’, Gen.12.8-9. In obedience to that which the promises implied, Abram journeyed deeper and deeper into Canaan, the land of God’s promise. ‘Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone’, Jms.2.17. Our daily progress in the holy life of faith is also our act of worship. We can daily build this altar of sacrifice, ‘To do good and communicate (share) forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased’, Heb.13.16. We also can call upon the name of the Lord, ‘Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name’, v15.

The Altar of Confession

‘Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land’, Gen.12.10. Later, under similar circumstances, Isaac was forbidden to leave the land of Canaan for Egypt, 26.1-5. Abram left the path of faith for the path of human wisdom. Our failures can be in our strong points, rather than our well-guarded weak points. This led Abram into scenes of fear, 12.12, lying v13, adultery v15, judgment v17, and rejection by men v20; see Matt.5.13. But it brought to Abram great material wealth, v16 and 13.2, which shows that material wealth is not necessarily a sign of spiritual wealth. However, the Lord worked, v17, and brought Abram back to Bethel. ‘Abram went up out of Egypt . . . even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord’, Gen.13.1-4. We must come back to the place where we left the path of faith. Abram came back to Bethel, to the altar, the place of worship, to prayer and communion with God. ‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’, 1Jn.1.9. ‘My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous’, 1Jn.2.1.

The Altar of Confidence

‘The Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever’, Gen.13.14-15. Abram was told to walk through the land as a symbolic act of possessing the land for his posterity. ‘Arise, walk through the land

in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee', v17. As he travelled through the land Abram built another altar. 'Then Abram removed his tent . . . and built there an altar unto the Lord', v18. This act of worship showed his confidence in the promises of God regarding the land and his posterity.

Do we arise confidently and take hold of all the spiritual promises God has given to us in Christ? For example, 'Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you', Rom.6.13-14. Living out the promises of God is also an act of worship.

The Altar of Consecration

'Abraham built an altar there . . . and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar', Gen.22.9. God now called upon Abraham to give everything to Him. For in Isaac Abraham not only possessed his well-beloved son, but also the promises of God, which could only be fulfilled through Isaac. The death of Isaac would mean the end of all that God had promised Abraham. Abraham was willing to consecrate his all to the will of God, 'Seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me', v12.

Are we willing to worship God by erecting the altar of consecration in our lives? 'What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's, 1Cor.6.19-20. 'In your hearts reverence Christ as Lord', 1Pet.3.15, R.S.V. As the Lord Jesus Christ said, 'If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments', John 14.15, R.V.

Consecration to His will, however difficult and costly, is also an act of worship daily performed.

—(to be continued D.V.)

PAPERS ON PROPHECY

by The Late W. W. Fereday (written in 1897/98)

VOLUME 2

10(b)—Babylon and the Beast

"So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns", v3. This point of view is very striking. When the angel showed John the bride of the Lamb, he carried him away "to a great and high mountain", Rev.21.10. To get into God's thoughts about the true Church, we must be lifted above the mists and clouds of this world into the clear atmosphere of His own blessed presence. But the seer was carried "into the wilderness" to see the great whore! thus would the Spirit of God remind us that all her surroundings are barren, even though her wealth and splendour abound. Do not genuine souls prove this? The impressive and gorgeous ceremonies of her ritual may captivate and overawe the senses, but they leave the soul unsatisfied and unfed. Ritual is not Christ, and He alone can satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul.

In connection with both visions, John tells us he was carried away "in the Spirit".

It is important to note this. On the one hand, heavenly things can only be truly learned when we are under the influence of the Holy Spirit; on the other, we only really discern the evil character of such a system as Babylon as He instructs us. With such deceitful hearts as ours, it would be hardly safe to gaze upon the glory and splendour of the harlot under any other guardianship. We might be attracted and ensnared.

Observe the woman's seat. She rides a scarlet-coloured beast, with seven heads and ten horns. We will say more about this when we come to the angel's interpretation of the vision; we merely say now that it is the revived Roman empire. The harlot has always loved and striven after earthly supremacy; here she has it fully.

The Spirit of God next dwells on her gaudy attire: "And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colours, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication", v4. Here we have every mark of earthly glory and even royalty. How utterly opposite to all that God has declared as His mind and will for His Church! Her heart is plainly in the world, not heaven; present and seen things are everything to her, not the unseen and eternal.

Now examine the contents of her golden cup: "full of abominations". The Spirit means by this idolatry (compare 1Kgs.11.5,7). How awful that such an evil should ever have crept into the profession of Christianity! Such is the poor human heart that it yearns for an object that may be seen. This is fully shown in heathendom. In Christendom such things came in first as aids to worship and as memorials of the departed; they soon became full objects of adoration to superstitious minds. Babylon has helped this enormously by means of her priesthood and hierarchy. This is in plain defiance of the law, Exod.20.3-5; how much more is it opposed to the spirit of Christianity!

Alas, idolatry will assume an even graver form still in the days to come! When the true saints of God quit this scene for the Father's house, and the presence of the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, the full height of human evil will be reached. We refer, of course, to the days of antichrist. Then it will not be a mere image or crucifix; but man, energised by Satan, will assume God's place and title, to his utter and fearful ruin.

The harlot's cup contained also "the filthiness of her fornications", v4, speaking to us of the awful moral corruptions which have resulted from her guilty intercourse with the world. The two ingredients of her cup appear in their early form in the epistles to Pergamos and Thyatira. In addressing Pergamos, the Lord rebukes her for dwelling where Satan's throne is — i.e., in the world — and then proceeds to speak of "the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication", Rev.2.12-14. In Thyatira we note a further advance in departure and evil, for Jezebel is brought before us, which calleth herself a prophetess and teacher, and seduces Christ's servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols, Rev.2.18-22. The whole epistle to Thyatira should be carefully pondered in connection with our subject, and it will be seen that Babylon the Great is really Thyatira fully developed.

—to be continued (D.V.)

“AND THE NAME OF THE DAUGHTER OF ASHER WAS SARAH” —Num.26.46

by David Ogden (Luton, England)

PAPER 2

Possibly one of the greatest dangers besetting the companies of the Lord's people today is a misunderstanding and misappreciation of the vital work of a sister. This can come from a lack of teaching, sometimes sadly it owes more to an imbibing of the spirit of rampant feminism which is permeating the world. The argument runs on these lines: since Scripture says that, “There is neither Jew or Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”, Gal.3.28. Women can therefore publicly perform the same role as men in worship and teaching and also, it is now being argued, in leadership. Such a view completely misinterprets Scripture, it even makes The Holy Spirit contradict Himself. It is not even logical. It is a sad commentary, on how much departure there has been from the Word of God, that it was a secular correspondent in a daily paper who, commenting on the agitation for “women priests” in Christendom observed that there is a difference between office and work. Paul makes precisely that point in 1Cor.12, when, through the Spirit of God, he mentions the different parts of the body, different in function but all vital to the well-being of the whole. It is not a question of men forbidding women to function publicly in the assembly, it is the Lord of the assembly Himself. That same Lord however has given the women valuable work for Him, which only they can fulfil.

God considered the name of Sarah, Asher's daughter, worthy to be included in His sacred word. In like manner He has called the sister to a place of honour in service for Him. As the elders are the standard of an Assembly's spirituality, the young men the source of an Assembly's strength, so the sisters are the secret of an Assembly's serenity.

How well Scripture illustrates the absolute and intrinsic worth of Godly women. Prov.31.10-31. It was a woman to whom the risen Lord first revealed Himself, Jn.20.14-17. The first mention of the Angel of the Lord is in connection with His appearance to a woman, Gen.16.7-13. Women stood at His cross, Jn.19.25, and came in devotion to the tomb, Lk.23.5;24.1. It was a woman of whom He said that her act of love would be forever spoken of for a memorial of her, Mk.14.1. Women ministered to Him, Lk.8.2-3, as they ministered to His servants, Acts.16.15, Rom.16.2, and as they had done to the prophets, 1Kgs.4.8-11. A woman hid Judah's rightful king, the link in the fulfilment of the promise of God, 2Chron.22.11.

On the other hand, it was women who led the people of God astray, Num.25, and it was a woman who was the cause of Samson's downfall, Jud.16.4-21, and another who cast a sad stain over the history of the early church, Acts.5.1-10. It was women whom Paul had to beseech to be of the same mind in the Lord, Phil.4.2.

Although most are relatively unknown, yet playing such an important role in the provision and purpose of God, godly sisters have an unparalleled privilege. The present writer thanks God for those godly women who taught him the Scriptures when a very small boy, and those who continued to be an example and encouragement to him. Paul commended Timothy's grandmother and mother in

like manner, 2Tim.1.5.

In this day and age when home life is often in jeopardy and under attack, the woman has a tremendous influence. See Tit.2.3-5. It has been said to the young couple standing together in the marriage ceremony, "The husband is the head of the house, the wife is queen of the home". 1Tim.3.11 makes it clear that the wife of one who would serve the Lord must have certain qualities, that does not of course absolve other wives. A wife can either hinder or enhance her husband's testimony and work for God. A brother once commented publicly thus: "Sometimes wives have been known to say "My husband may be the head but I am the neck which turns the head". He added that he had once used this as an illustration but was told that medically it is not so, both are controlled by the brain. He then went on to make the telling observation that it should be such in a believer's married life, both are under the control of the Lord Himself, Eph.5.22-31 and 1Pet.3.5-7 are both relevant here.

Sisters are not second rate brothers, in fact some are far more spiritual and discerning. The work is different, it is not inferior. 1Cor.11.3-16 paints a lovely picture of headship. "The head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man and the head of Christ is God", v3, and to suggest inferiority in the second relationship is to imply it in the third, and that is both blasphemy and heresy.

Are you an unknown and frequently unappreciated saint, toiling long and devotedly for your Master, unextolled and often unnoticed? Fear not, he who cares for sparrows and records their fall, knows all about you and loves you with an everlasting love, holding you firmly in His care.

"And the name of the daughter of Asher was Sarah". Unknown to man — known to God.
(Concluded)

THE MIND OF CHRIST

by C. Jones (Cardiff, Wales)

PAPER 2

Although He was God, He was "... found in fashion as a man", v8, that is, in appearance He was a man. He humbled Himself and was completely obedient to the Father's will, Ps.40.8, Jn.6.38, 14.31, 15.10, even to the extent of dying on a Cross. He need not have died because death is a result of sin, Rom.5.12, and He is eternally sinless, for He is "... holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners ..." Heb.7.26. He voluntarily tasted death for every man, Heb.2.9, "... that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil", Heb.2.14. He experienced the awful physical and mental agonies of death on a cross and of being punished by His God for sins, not His own since he was sinless, but for the sins of the whole world, 1Pet.2.24; 1Jn.2.2, all this "... by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God", Acts.2.23. He became a curse for us, Gal.3.13, Deut.21.23, and was "... despised and rejected of men", Isa.53.3.

Verse 9 tells us that because of all the Lord did in looking on the needs of sinners, coming down from heaven, becoming a Servant, being found in fashion as a Man,

humbling Himself and being obedient even to the death on the Cross, God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name. The servant is now exalted, Isa.52.13. He was highly exalted at His resurrection and ascension and now He sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high, Heb.1.3, 8.1, "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," Eph.1.21. The next time He descends from His position of glory He will come to take believers to be with Him forever, 1Thess.4.13-18.

All created things, in heaven, on earth and under the earth, are going to bow at the name of Jesus, v10. This is really the name given to Jesus and is the name Jehovah and it is before a Man who is declared to be Jehovah the Saviour, that all will bow.

In Col.1.20 we read "And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven". Here, things under the earth, i.e. infernal beings, are not mentioned because they cannot be reconciled to God, but nonetheless they will acknowledge that He is the exalted Lord, Phil.2.10. Ultimately, all creation will praise Him, Rev.5.13, Ps.148.

One day every tongue will openly confess the same truth that Jesus Christ is Lord, v11, because He is Lord and His throne is everlasting, Heb.1.8. Understanding that Jesus Christ is Lord can only be by revelation from God, 1Cor.12.3. The believer has the opportunity now, in this life, to confess Him as Lord and to show in the life the reality of that confession. This can only come about through the gracious working of the Holy Spirit gradually causing the believer's mind to become more like the Lord's mind. The Lord did all things well, Mk.7.37 and to the Glory of God the Father, Jn.17.4. The honour, exaltation and praise given to the Son glorify the Father, Jn.5.23. We have seen Him emptying Himself and voluntarily accepting the limitations resulting from taking the form of a Servant and being found in fashion as a Man in order to carry out the will of the Father. In verses 9-11, however, we see Him highly exalted and every tongue confessing Him as Lord to the glory of the Father. The glory of the Father was always the object of all the Lord did, Jn.17.4.

Now we come to the practical import of this teaching. 'Let this mind be in you . . .'

Through prayerful study of the Word, meditation on its truths and obedience to its precepts, we will, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, become more like the Lord. We will not simply be imitators of Christ's perfect example in our own strength but, empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit, the life of Christ will, by the grace of God, be seen increasingly in us. Our minds will become more like the Lord's mind and minds control actions. We are told to humble ourselves, Jms.4.10, and believers who are being led by the Spirit will think less of themselves and more of others and will experience joy and peace in so doing. The main object of the mind and life will not be self but Christ and this will result in blessing, help and encouragement for others and an absence of strife. The Christ-centred life is disciplined. The fruit of the Spirit, Gal.5.22-23, will be seen and every aspect of that life will be affected. Time, energy, God-given abilities and possessions will all be used in accordance with the will of God and to His glory.

We have been saved by grace, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are called to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, Eph.4.1, to ". . . walk, even as He walked", 1Jn.2.6. If His life is to be lived out in us then His mind must be in us.

—(concluded)

The Jews Scattered

by John B. D. Page (Weston-super-Mare)

PAPER 1

At the dawn of their long history, the Lord miraculously brought the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt. This was the first light of freedom for them. Coming to the foot of Sinai where they encamped, the Lord made known His purpose for them: that was “an holy nation”. For Christians, the divine purpose is not different: God hath . . . called us . . . unto holiness”. Holy living was meant for the Israelites and similarly it is intended for Christians: no worship of idols, Lev.26.1, and no inter-marriage with ungodly persons, Deut.7.3f. Breaking either or both prohibitions results in turning away from following the Lord.

On Mount Sinai God told Moses to warn the people that “if ye will not . . . hearken . . . unto Me, but walk contrary unto Me; then . . . I will scatter you among the nations, . . . and your land shall be desolate . . .” Lev.25.1; 26.27f; 30.33. Walking contrary to the Lord was for the Israelites, on this occasion and subsequently, to turn away from Him and turn to idols. They had an innate tendency to worship heathen gods as their forefathers did, initially east of the River Euphrates and later in Egypt, Josh.24.24,RV. In this warning, the Lord was looking ahead to the time when the Israelites would enter and dwell in Canaan. He told them clearly that if they failed to destroy the Canaanite idols, He would then, in judgment, not only destroy such abominations, but scatter them among the nations. The Lord then demanded of His earthly people what He now requires of His heavenly people: turning to God from idols, which are all things that detract from Christ, 1Thess.1.9.

By the fortieth year after leaving Egypt, all that generation, except two, had died owing to unbelief and disobedience and there had arisen a new generation. They were encamped in the land of Moab, Deut.1.3-5 and just one month before crossing the Jordan to possess the promised land when Moses addressed them several times. In his first address, after rehearsing how the Lord had led their fathers from Horeb and through the wilderness, he said, “Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God . . . and make you a graven image, . . . which the Lord hath forbidden thee”. Continuing, he warned, “When thou shalt . . . make a graven image . . . to provoke Him to anger . . . the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the nations . . .”, Deut.4.23,25,27. To this new generation the Lord said “lest ye forget”. If they did forget His covenant and make a heathen idol, then the consequences would be serious — scattered among the nations and few would survive. Forgetfulness is a human failing which also applies to us. But let us be determined like the Psalmist who said “I will not forget Thy word”, Ps.119.16 — when reading the Scriptures. Let us be “not a forgetful hearer”, Jas.1.25, when listening to ministry at a meeting.

Still encamped in the land of Moab where Moses addressed the people for the

fifth time, he said, "if thou shalt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments . . . , the Lord shall scatter thee among all peoples from one end of the earth even unto the other . . . ", Deut.28.15,64. Failing to "hearken" and "do" (not some, but) "all His commandments" would mean dire trouble — the nation scattered from one end of the earth to the other, that is, worldwide scattering. Harkening and doing seem to be inseparable, not only concerning the Israelites of old but also Christians today. Believers are told to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only", Jas.1.22. Hearing the Word of God should have a salutary effect on our behaviour.

The Israelites possessed the land. The centuries passed, but the Lord's warnings through Moses were generally unheeded by the people during the periods of the judges and the monarchy. After the kingdom was divided, the idolatrous northern kingdom of Israel was told that "the Lord . . . shall root up Israel out of this good land . . . and shall scatter them beyond the river (Euphrates), because they made groves (i.e. idols of wood), provoking the anger of the Lord", 1 Kgs.14.15. later, they were exiled to Assyria. Subsequently, to the rebellious southern kingdom of Judah the Lord said, "I will scatter you like chaff driven by the wind from the desert", Jer.13.24, RSV. A telling simile! Even during the Captivity in Babylon the Lord warned the exiles collectively that "the whole remnant of thee will I scatter unto all the winds, Ezek.5.10, RV. A striking illustration for scattering them throughout the world.

Not until A.D.70, after the Jews' rejection of Christ — the climax of their waywardness, did these ancient prophecies begin to be fulfilled. This apparent delay demonstrated the mercy of God towards His persistently rebellious people. In that year the Romans destroyed Jerusalem with its temple which was followed by the scattering of the Jews and so the dark days of their dispersion began. Scattered into nearby countries and eventually to distant lands unknown to them as the Lord had said, "I shall scatter them also among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known", Jer.9.16. the Jews have been found in every country of the world, except Iceland.

During nineteen centuries of dispersion the Jews have been hated and rejected, suffering inconceivably from false accusations, banishment, massacres and anti-Jewish laws, particularly in Europe where the climax was reached in 1940-1945 when six million Jews were systematically killed: fathers and mothers with their children, both young and old people alike. Foreseeing such terrible sufferings, Moses said, "among these nations shalt thou find no ease . . . And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee . . . In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart . . . and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see", Deut.28.55,ff. In times of uncertainty and full of fear in foreign countries, this is precisely how they have reacted. The accuracy of Scripture!

The instigators of persecuting the Jews will not escape the judgment of God, Who told His people: "he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye", Zech.2.8. A solemn warning against anti-Semitism!

Against this background of the Jews' disobedience to divine commands, leading to departure from following the Lord and culminating in their global dispersion, there is an art gallery, as it were, in Heb.11 of men and women who pleased God in living by faith. Truly, the Lord has His own in every age.

The above article, and one to follow in the next issue are very relevant to the 50th Anniversary of the State of Israel in May, 1998 — Ed.

THE GARMENTS OF THE LORD

by D. M. Clark (Canada)

PAPER 2

HIS GRAVE CLOTHES

John 20.7, "And the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself". There has been endless discussion about the validity of the "Shroud of Turin". Such discussion could have been settled very quickly by reference to this Scripture. Clearly there was a napkin wrapped separately about His head, while the balance of His body was entwined in linen. Not a single shroud.

The grave clothes remind us that Christ died. The work on the cross was completed. Although He died on the cross He did not die because of the cross. Christ dismissed His own spirit, for He had received that power from the Father. Jn.10.18, "No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father".

They also tell of His burial, when the kind hands of Joseph and Nicodemus, having prepared His body, laid Him in a tomb and rolled the stone over its mouth. His body was there for the required three days, (a Rabbi of that period has said: "A day and a night are an 'onah' and the portion of an 'onah' is as the whole of it". This has been added to explain the "three days and three nights" that the Lord was in the tomb.

They declare His resurrection. The care with which the grave clothes were left, when the Lord departed the tomb, shows that there was no haste in His departure. Most of all, they are part of the witness that He rose triumphantly over death, so He could say: Rev.1.18, "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death". These words thrill us, for they make us realise that: "... if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him", 2Tim.2.11.

Phil.3.20-21, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself".

THE PRIESTLY ROBES OF JUDGMENT

Rev.1.13, “And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle”.

The Lord Jesus is presented to us here as the Son of Man, clothed in priestly garments. The golden girdle speaks of His divine righteousness. He is seen exercising His priestly office in connection with the seven churches of Asia, however, He will also be the judge of all, for the Father has committed all judgment into His hands, Jn.5.22.

The things that characterise Him are similar to those in the vision that Daniel had of Him in ch.7.9, “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire”.

The judgments given in the second and third chapters of Revelation remind us of His omniscience, for He repeats the expression “I know” as He addresses each of the seven churches. This also has a message for us, for there is nothing that we can hide from His all-seeing eye. We should be conscious at all times “that all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do”, Heb.4.13. We can claim the promise of the Word that, “if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin”, 1Jn.1.7. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”, 1Jn.1.9. It is good to know that as our Advocate He is there to effect restoration when we fall, 1Jn.2.1.

BLOOD STAINED GARMENTS

Rev.19.13, “And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God”. The blood on the vesture of the Lord Jesus, in this instance, is symbolic of the blood of His enemies, who will die at the end of the tribulation, when His earthly kingdom will be established.

Isaiah predicted this time in Isa.63.1-4, “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me: for I will tread them in Mine anger, and trample them in My fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all My raiment. For the day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come”.

As we view the world and see the workings of sin, in the conduct of people and nations, we know that judgment is pending. We also know that the only thing that delays the tribulation, and the judgment which will follow, is the continuing grace of God, and the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth in the church, 2Thess.2.7. We understand too, that “the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh”, Gen.6.3.

CONCLUSION

The Lord of Glory, who has been considered in the various garments in which He appears, is to be known to all creation as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Rev.19.16. Thus the purpose of the Father, concerning His Son, will be fulfilled before a wondering world.

For the church, our next view of the Lord Jesus will be when He comes for us. 1Thess.4.16, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and, so shall we ever be with the Lord". Then shall the reality of our hope be fulfilled for, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is", 1Jn.3.2 We shall then be clothed with the garments of righteousness and salvation, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels", Isa.61.10.

Lo, He comes from heaven descending,

Once for guilty sinners slain!

Thousand thousand saints attending

Swell the triumph of His train!

Hallelujah!

Jesus comes and comes to reign.

See the Saviour, long expected,

Now in solemn pomp appear!

And His saints, by man rejected,

All His heavenly glory share:

Hallelujah!

See the Son of Man appear!

Lo! The tokens of His passion,

Though in glory, still He bears;

Cause of endless exultation

To His ransomed worshippers;

Hallelujah!

Christ the Lamb of God appears.

Israel's race shall now behold Him

Full of grace and majesty;

Though they set at naught and sold Him,

Pierced and nailed Him to the tree,

Now in glory

Shall their great Messiah see.

'Tis Thy heavenly bride and Spirit,

Jesus, Lord! that bid Thee come;

All the glory to inherit,

And to take Thy people home.

All creation

Travails, groans, till Thou shalt come.

Yea, Amen, let all adore Thee,

High on Thine exalted throne:

Saviour, take the power and glory;

Claim the kingdoms for Thine own:

Come, Lord Jesus!

Hallelujah! Come, Lord, come!

—(concluded)

Like a moth fluttering round a candle, the Christian who plays and tampers with sin will one day fall with his wings destroyed and his testimony blighted.

Donald Ross

'BY ALL MEANS SAVE SOME'

by S. S. Nicholes (Wales)

The title of this article is found in 1Cor.9.22. These words sound very good yet are sincerely used by many to justify unscriptural methods in seeking to reach the lost. It is necessary, as with all scripture, to consider them in light of the context in which they are found.

What did the apostle mean? He asks in v18, 'What is my reward then'? This is in contrast to v17 where he indicated that his reward consisted of the joy of refusing a reward. What a paradox! Let us read through verses 18-22 and seek to elucidate their meaning. The author's comments are in italics. "Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel! For though I be free from all men, (*i.e. free from any who could exercise compulsion or control over him. There is the worldly saying, 'He who pays the piper calls the tune'*), yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; (*i.e. when among them he practised the customs which he was not obliged to observe*); to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, (*Gentiles, not necessarily lawless — they were outside the scope of the Mosaic law*) as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law. (*Gospel freedom is not lawlessness, but ever subject to the 'law of Christ'. His freedom from the law of Moses did not involve freedom to please himself*). To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: (*he abstained from things which they considered to be wrong, though he did not necessarily view them as such*) I am made all things to all men, (*does not mean a sacrifice of principles, but a readiness to approach people on their most accessible side*) that I might by all means save some. (*Every permissible method was used in order to save men*). v23, "And this I do for the gospel's sake".

The following verses make it abundantly clear that the 'all means' of v22 must be subject to the given rules if he was to receive a crown. "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize"? v24. The idea is not that of competing with others, but that of the self discipline necessary to be successful in the race. The apostle likely had in mind the great Isthmian games that were held every three years close to Corinth. "So run", he exhorts, "that ye may obtain". The victor received a crown consisting of a garland of ivy or pine leaves. For them it was a corruptible crown. For the apostles and us, an incorruptible crown. If, however, in spite of winning, one of the competitors had broken the rules, he was disqualified. This is the thought behind the word 'castaway', in v27.

So the words, 'by all means save some' must be understood in the light of the context of the chapter which is subjection to the law of Christ, abiding by the rules and this will involve self discipline if we are to be among those who will receive the crown at the judgment seat of Christ.

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (52)

by T. J. Blackman (Brazil)

For the third time I was at a retreat in the Surrey countryside for a course of intensive Buddhist meditation. This time I was in earnest. I wanted to make it my life's purpose to seek true wisdom and "enlightenment", and had thoughts of becoming a "monk". This may have been possible even without going to the Far East as there were Buddhist communities in the London area, and I had resolved to talk this over with the meditation teacher, himself a Buddhist monk from Thailand.

As the week proceeded it became increasingly difficult to concentrate, and unclean and violent thoughts, which I imagined had been left behind long ago as I practised the "eightfold path", came flooding back with overwhelming force. So much so that it soon became clear that all that this meditation and self-discipline had done, was nothing more than to place a flimsy veneer of superficial tranquility over a seething mass of incurable wickedness.

The reader may think this description a little extreme. In fact words cannot adequately describe the bottomless cesspit of sin that is the heart of man, and that I found to be in my heart. I have since learnt that, in His sovereign mercy (there is no other explanation), our Saviour God was teaching me the first lesson in "the word of the truth of the Gospel". For that awful vision, which liberated me from the illusions of oriental mysticism, was in complete accord with all that the Holy Scriptures say about our human nature. See, for example, Mk.7.20-23 and Romans 3.10-18 — dear reader, if you are not saved, read these two passages on your knees — what they describe is how God, your Judge, sees you!

At this time I was 21 and living with my parents in the northwest London suburbs. My interest in eastern religion had come about through a fascination with the art, music and general culture of that part of the world, combined with a growing concern to understand what life was all about. Our family was vaguely connected with the Anglican denomination and for a while I had attended their Sunday school, but soon drifted away, attracted by all that "this present evil world" was offering the young.

Disillusioned now with Buddhism and gradually realizing that I could never save nor enlighten myself, I began to despair of ever having peace or understanding. Finding an old Bible in the attic I began to read and found that this Book spoke to me in a way that none other had ever done. This was a copy of the Authorized version. Hearing that modern translations of the Bible were readily available, I obtained one, imagining that God's message would be even clearer in modern English. The language, doubtless, was clearer, but, instead of giving me a solid basis for faith, my head was soon filled with doubts and uncertainties due to the interminable footnotes informing that "many authorities omit . . .", "other manuscripts have", etc.

However, in spite of the confusion of my mind, and, often, the despair of my

heart, as I groped in the darkness, God in His sovereign grace was still drawing me with cords of love and teaching me how much I needed His Son to cleanse me with His precious blood. From my initial awakening to the fact of my sin, I was now enabled to see, as I read the Scriptures, the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the terrible holiness of my Creator and Judge.

Having continued in this state for some weeks, one day a gospel tract appeared on the doormat. In itself the tract did not meet my need, nor did the “follow-up” literature, including Bible correspondence courses, for which I wrote. But eventually I was put in touch with a godly couple in the local assembly, and they were willing instruments in the Lord’s hand, sparing no pains to expound for me the way of Salvation.

Incidentally, I learned subsequently that about 10,000 tracts were distributed in the Harrow area on that occasion —mine was the only response. But this one soul being saved has resulted in many more thousands of tracts being distributed both in the UK and in Brazil. Keep sowing the precious seed brethren! Eternity will show it was time and effort well spent.

At that time shift work kept me from attending many meetings, but whenever possible I went to the Gospel Hall where my new friends were in fellowship. Sadly, the Gospel was not always preached on Lord’s day evenings, some speakers apparently thinking it right to give a “talk” about their recent holiday in the USA or whatever. However, from time to time a faithful preacher was invited, and what I heard helped me on a little towards an understanding of God’s salvation.

Again and again I was told, “you just need to believe on the Lord Jesus . . . just believe in His finished work”, but I had great difficulty in understanding what this meant. At times I would wander in a nearby wood in an agony of soul, desperately wanting the blessings that believing would bring, but still not understanding what it meant to “only trust Him”. Sometimes I tried in vain to “believe”, as if faith could be worked up by an exercise of will, but mostly I just cried out to this God I did not know, begging Him, if He really existed, and really loved a wretch like me, to lighten my darkness.

Finally, over nine months since first being awakened to the fact of my sin, I was present at the Gospel meeting when a brother spoke plainly from Romans 6.23. The truth of that verse remained with me the following day. Gradually it became clearer to me that salvation was a free gift, given to the sinner on the basis of the merits of Christ alone. At about 1 00 a.m. on Tuesday 16th May 1972 it pleased God, to reveal His Son to me, and I rested in the all-sufficiency of His sacrificial death and the infinite power of His triumphant resurrection.

As I write, with tears of thankfulness, this account of God’s gracious dealings, I am many thousands of miles from England, in southeast Brazil. I will attempt to relate briefly how I came to be here.

It was only after conversion that I discovered what true meditation is — meditation on God’s Word in His presence. After about three years, and in spite of being a man of few words, and those few words generally far from eloquent, God began to enable me to open my mouth in the proclamation of the Gospel, and later

in the ministry of His Word. I also gave much time to tract distribution, sometimes cycling to nearby towns and villages to sow the precious seed.

The first awakening of interest in Brazil came when, in 1974, I met, and subsequently married, Dorothy, eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Nye who had served the Lord in that land for many years. However, it was not until 1981 that, through two missionary reports on the work in Brazil, we began to think seriously about the possibility of serving the Lord in that vast land.

Although deeply interested in the work of the Gospel, and always keen to be involved in it, I realized that I had not got what it takes to be a pioneer missionary. But repeatedly the need for teaching in many parts of Brazil was brought to our attention, and I thought perhaps in some small way we could try to help in this direction. As the exercise deepened, we made our thoughts known to the assembly at Ebenezer Gospel Hall, Gloucester, where we were now in fellowship.

There were many obstacles, which could only be removed by the Lord Himself. Not least of these was our complete lack of financial resources; we could not even afford the train fare to London to apply for visas. But the Lord wonderfully confirmed His purpose for us, often providing what we needed in most unexpected and timely ways. These experiences were an important preparation for the many trials we would face in Brazil, and often it has been the remembrance of God's clear call and gracious provision that has kept us going.

Commended to the grace of God for His work in Brazil by the assembly in Gloucester, we finally arrived here on 9th October 1985. After just over a year in Tupi Paulista, learning the language with the kind help of John and Claudete Axford, we moved to Pirassununga where we still live, seeking to assist in the spread of the Gospel in the region, and endeavouring to build up the small assemblies. "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake".

Satisfied

And shall I really see Thee, glorious Lord:
Who though unseen, art worshipped, loved, adored?
What joy and rapture fill my longing heart,
To think that I shall see Thee as Thou art:
Shall stand before Thee — perfect, spotless, whole,
Fruit of Thy suffering, travail of Thy soul,
O joy of joys, O ecstasy of bliss,
What thought can measure such a thought as this?

*As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness:
I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness*
Psalm 17:15

(Selected)

Good Tidings from Heaven

AN UNEXPECTED EVENT - CONVERSION

In the realm of business, planning has to be done for years ahead. The planners seek to anticipate every eventuality and then have some contingency plan to cover the unexpected and unanticipated event. It is true that there are unexpected events which come into the lives of all. Some are pleasant surprises, like the unexpected invitation to a wedding, the resolution of a seemingly insurmountable problem; others are unpleasant, like the news of unemployment, a sudden illness and even death itself.

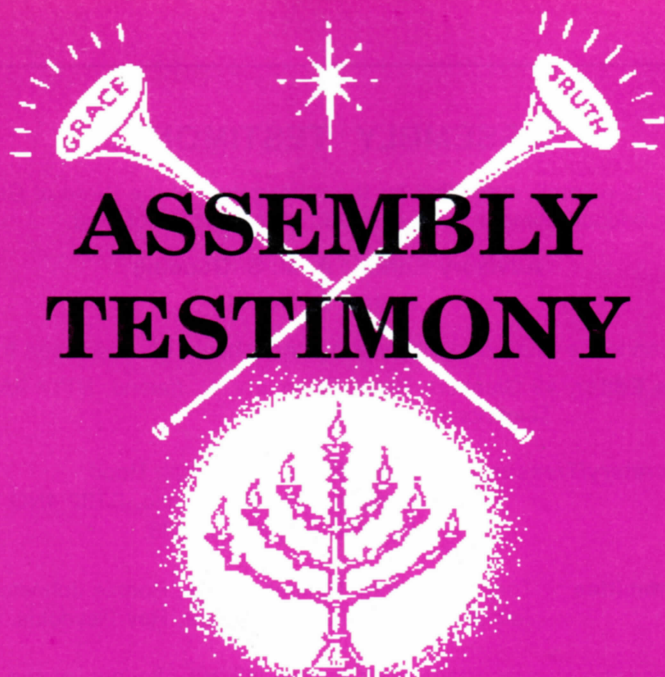
Many people have experienced an unexpected event which changed their eternal destiny. There was a man called Saul who came from Tarsus. He was a religious Jew, fanatical in his zeal, an enemy of Christ and the gospel and a persecutor of the Christians. He left one morning to embark on a campaign of severe persecution against all who professed Christianity. Just as the morning was passing, at noon, there was an unexpected event and the zealous Jew became a Christian. God suddenly intervened in his life and the greatest persecutor Christianity had known became its greatest preacher. Saul of Tarsus became the apostle Paul who wrote, under inspiration, much of the New Testament Scriptures.

How did that come about? You can read it in Acts ch.9, ch.22, ch.26. He also refers, in an oblique way, to this great experience in other scriptures, eg Gal.1; Phil.3; 1Tim.1.

The first thing that happened was an intervention from heaven. God spoke to this man as he was in rebellion and sin. Saul, in days prior to the completion of the Bible, heard a literal voice. All who presently are in relationship with God have heard His voice through the Bible. Saul learned that God was right and he was wrong. Dear reader, have you learned that God is right regarding His condemnation of sin and is right to punish the sinner eternally? Have you learned that your thoughts and ideas are wrong and are, in fact, irrelevant? God says, "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways", Isa.55.8.

There was then a revelation of the risen, exalted and glorified Lord Jesus, the One whom Saul had deemed to be an imposter. He was now convinced that he was wrong about Christ. Smitten to the dust of the Damascus Road, Saul acknowledged this "imposter" as his Lord and was at that moment saved. Before this he had religion, and that the only one sanctioned by God, but then he got salvation. Have you got salvation and are you sure of heaven? Religion cannot take away your sins and give you a fitness for heaven. There is only one power that can do this, "ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ", 1Pet.1.18-19.

Read the story of Bartimaeus, Mk.10, Zacchaeus, Lk.19, the dying thief, Lk.23, the Philippian jailor, Acts 16, and see how that salvation comes to a soul suddenly. It is not the result of a long process and is not something into which a person grows. Nor is it a result of having believing relatives or religious ordinances. It comes the moment a soul is convicted of sin, does an about turn, thus repenting of their sins, and accepts the Saviour who died for all mankind on the cross of Calvary.



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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Advisory Editor : A. M. S. Gooding

Editor: B. Currie

Correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to:

The Editor, 49 Glenburn Road, Dunmurry, N. Ireland, BT17 9AN.
Telephone (01232) 621343.

Secretary/Treasurer : William Neill, 109 Lurgan Road,
Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.
Telephone (018206) 24238.

Committee : Tom Armstrong, Thomas Beggs, Ronnie Johnston,
James McKeown, James Moore, Roy Reynolds.

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BEHOLD YOUR KING

(Meditations in Matthew)

by Jim Flanigan (Belfast)

15. The Charge to the Twelve (Ch.10)

Chapter 10 brings to us the second of the six great discourses of the Lord Jesus in Matthew's Gospel. This "Charge to the twelve" is full of instruction on a variety of themes. There are 42 verses of directions, encouragements, and warnings, for all who would serve Him, and while there is much which is of particular relevance to the twelve, there are, nevertheless, unchanging principles for His servants in any and every age.

Those who serve Him are the servants of sovereignty. It is the Lord of the harvest who calls and sends and empowers the true servant. What variety there was in this original band of twelve. How different the personalities as they were sent out two by two. How would the impetuous, impulsive Peter work in the harvest field with the cautious, melancholy Thomas? How would Matthew, the former tax collector for the hated Romans, labour side by side with Simon the erstwhile Jewish zealot? Only the grace that called them could mould them and equip them and endow them with a compatibility to work together for Him.

The kingdom was at hand. There was an urgency which called them to the work and His servants were required to be sensitive to His call. They must indeed go at His command, to preach and give to men what He had given to them. But there were restrictions too. "Go not", He commands, "into the way of the Gentiles and Samaritans". The greatness of the need does not in itself constitute a call. It may truly be a cry for help but the labourer must be sensitive to divine leading and guidance in his response to the need.

They were to learn too, a dependency which would trust Him to meet their every need. He would not send them a warfaring at their own charge. They needed neither gold or silver or brass in their purses. Nor need they be anxious about food and clothing. He who cares for sparrows, v29-31, and who feeds the ravens and clothes the lilies, ch.6.26-30, will care for His servants. He who was sending them out would provide.

In it all they were to be characterised by a dignity which was worthy of the Master. They were not beggars. Nor were they canvassing. They were courteous ambassadors of peace. They should salute those who would receive them and leave those who rejected them, and in the day of judgment it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for those who refused the ministry of these apostles.

How wise and prudent they must be. He was sending them as sheep into the midst of wolves and they would need to be as wise as serpents. They were not to be cunning, of course, but watchful and wise, yet with the unalloyed simplicity and gentleness of the harmless dove. As wise as serpents they would detect the danger and as swift as doves they would flee from it.

For these twelve, as for the remnant of a future day, there were warnings of persecution. They would be imprisoned and scourged. They would be arraigned before councils and synagogues and before governors and kings. They would be charged falsely and scourged unjustly, but it was all for His sake and He would be with them in the trial. How literally was all this fulfilled in the twelve, and for that faithful preaching remnant after the rapture of the church it will be so again. But they must not fear. The Spirit of their Father would give them the right words for every occasion. Families would be divided, brother against brother, father against child, children against parents, even to causing the believing parent to be put to death. There would be universal hatred and persecution for His Name's sake, but their ultimate salvation was assured. It would be encouraging, though humbling, for them to remember that as it was with them, so had it been with the Master. The servant was not greater than his Lord. If men called the Master "Beelzebub", what would they call His household? It was a diabolical slander both of Himself and His disciples but they must preach boldly and courageously. They had truth which must be made known.

The Saviour looks for loyalty in the midst of adversity. He will confess those who confess Him, but will deny the unbeliever. He acknowledges that it will not be easy. It is a strange paradox, that the preaching of the gospel of peace and the presentation of the Prince of peace so often occasions strife among men. So again the Lord warns them of divided households. Sons, fathers, daughters, mothers, daughters-in-law, would be at variance. A man would not have to look beyond his own household for enemies. But love for Christ must prevail over family ties and relationships. The heavy cross of loss of friends and companions must be taken up to follow the Saviour, and if that seemed like losing one's life, then so be it. In the reckoning of heaven it would actually be finding life and keeping it eternally. We must get our priorities right.

The discourse is concluded with the encouraging reminder that all service and suffering is fellowship with Him. Whoever received them received Him, and this was a receiving of the Father too. In a coming day faithfulness would be rewarded. Prophets and preachers and hearers alike would enjoy His, "Well done". Even the little things done for Him would not be forgotten. A cup of cold water given in His Name would be remembered and rewarded. He would notice and would suitably recompense.

So the charge to the twelve is concluded. It is a dispensational discourse with a near and a distant application. The twelve were like a remnant of the nation acknowledging Jesus as Messiah, and they would suffer for their testimony. Likewise there will be a remnant testimony in a day to come. That future remnant will find much instruction and help and comfort in the reading of this tenth chapter of Matthew. We live and serve in an interim period but there are abiding principles in the discourse which we can safely apply to our service today. There is sovereignty, compatibility, urgency, sensitivity, dignity, courtesy, dependency, simplicity, loyalty. These great things should be the portion of His servants in every age.

May we endeavour to be loyal and true servants, diligent in the great harvest field for the Lord of the harvest.

—to be continued (D.V.)

Assembly Testimony Bible Class

by J. Riddle (Cheshunt)

The Church and the Churches

(22) Head Coverings (2)

We have noticed that in 1Cor.11, Paul deals with the question of head-coverings in the assembly in four ways. He points out that the uncovered head of a sister, and for that matter, the covered head of a brother, is:

- (1) Contrary to divine principle, v3-6;
- (2) Contrary to creatorial precedent, v7-12;
- (3) Contrary to spiritual propriety, v13-15;
- (4) Contrary to apostolic practice, v16.

1) IT IS CONTRARY TO DIVINE PRINCIPLE, v3-6

We have already considered this, and noticed that Paul establishes the principle of headship, v3, and refers to the violation of headship, v4-6.

2) IT IS CONTRARY TO CREATORIAL PRECEDENT, v7-12

Paul now examines the subject in view of creation, and draws two important conclusions, each of which is introduced by the word “ought”, which means ‘it is necessary’, or ‘one must’. It has the idea of logical necessity.

A) That a man ought not to cover his head, v7-9

The couplet “man . . . woman” occurs three times in this paragraph, and on each occasion it has a different emphasis. He looks at the relative position of man and woman, in order to emphasise why a man ought not to cover his head.

i) In creation glory, v7. “*For a man* indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the *woman* is the glory of the man”. In the case of the man, he is “the **image** and **glory** of God”. See Ps.8: “Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour”. Adam was the representative of God. The word “image”, see Gen.1.27, means the visible representation of God. This description of the man therefore emphasises his dignity in the assembly. In the case of the woman, she is “the glory of the man”. ‘She is not designed to reflect the glory of God as a ruler. She is the glory of the man . . . She always assumes his station; becomes a queen if he is a king, and manifests to others the wealth and honour which may belong to her husband’, (C. Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*).

ii) In creation order, v8. “For the *man* is not of the woman; but the *woman* of the man”. This emphasises the man’s precedence in creation. See 1Tim. 2.13, “For Adam was first formed, then Eve”.

iii) In creation purpose, v9. Neither was the *man* created for the woman; but the

woman for the man". This emphasises the purpose of her creation: "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him (or, answering to him)", Gen.2.18. This is rendered by the New Translation (JND) 'A helpmeet, his like', with the footnote, 'or counterpart'. Eve was the complement or counterpart of Adam.

B) That a woman ought to cover her head, v10-12

In this paragraph, Paul draws two important conclusions about the woman from the preceding verses:

i) Her subject position, v10. "For this cause", that is, in view of God's purpose in creation, "ought the woman to have power (a sign of authority) on her head, because of the angels". That is, a sign that she is subject to authority. Then Paul adds, "because of the angels". We must think about this.

Since Paul has been appealing to precedent in creation, he is evidently now saying that the angels who saw divine authority flouted in Eden, expect to see it maintained in the church. Angels are interested spectators. They carefully observe the affairs and conduct of God's people: see Eph.3.10, 1Cor.4.9, 1Tim.5.21, 1Pet.1.12.

The angels who said at the Lord's birth, "Glory to God in the highest", expect to see "glory to God" in the assembly. The Lord Jesus has been dishonoured by men, but angels expect Christ to be honoured in the assembly. We must remember too that there had been rebellion amongst the ranks of angels: but there was to be no rebellion in the assembled church.

ii) Her equal position, v11-12. "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither is the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God". These two verses have been properly termed 'Safeguard verses'. They emphasise that what has been taught thus far, in no way infers an inferior place for the woman. A subject place is not an inferior place.

Man and woman are mutually dependent. In the assembly, both sexes are mutually dependent "in the Lord". It is beautiful to observe that in the assembly, the relative position of man and woman, as designed by God in creation, is to be exhibited. Paul has dealt with this in the preceding verses. Now he says that the mutual dependence of man and woman, as designed by God in creation, is also to be exhibited in the assembly. The assembly is the place where God's purposes for man and woman are fulfilled, and where the respective glories of man and woman are acknowledged.

When Paul says, "For the woman is of the man", he refers to creation. Adam exclaimed, "She shall be called, Woman, because she was taken out of the man", Gen.2.23. When he says, "even so is the man also by the woman", he refers to procreation. Eve exclaimed, "I have gotten a man from the Lord", Gen.4.1. (This could be rendered, 'I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord'). Both quotations enable us to understand why Paul added, "but all things are of God".

Paul deals with the mutual dependence of man and woman within marriage in 1Cor.7.3-4: "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence ('her due'): and

likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife". Both passages emphasise, amongst other things, that God assigns equal importance to brothers and sisters in the assembly, and to man and wife in marriage.

3) IT IS CONTRARY TO SPIRITUAL PROPRIETY, v13-15

Literally: 'is it becoming or fitting that a woman should pray to God uncovered?' That is, does a display of natural beauty and glory accord with ministry in the presence of God? In the assembly, no attention must be drawn to woman's beauty and glory. God's glory must have undivided attention.

Paul emphasises the unique position of the woman in this respect by contrasting the length of hair on men and women respectively.

i) There is no beauty and glory in a man with long hair! "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" It is "a shame unto him" because he has abandoned his own masculine dignity by looking like a woman. God expects men to look like men, and women to look like women. This applies to dress as well as hair. God has given to men and women distinctive glories, and these should be carefully maintained for His pleasure.

ii) There is beauty and glory in a woman with long hair. "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering". We should carefully note that the word "covering" translates a different original word from that used in v4,5,6 and 13. It means 'something thrown round': a mantle about her body. The same is rendered "vesture" in Heb.1.12. This emphasises the necessity for a second covering. As J. Heading observes, 'even the natural senses of a believer would cause him or her to own that such natural glory has no place in spiritual service or in the presence of God'.

4) IT IS CONTRARY TO APOSTOLIC PRACTICE, v16

"But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God". The words, "*we* have no such custom", refers to the apostles. Compare 4.9 etc. Then there was assembly practice: "neither the churches of God". This suggests that this particular disorder was peculiar to Corinth. It is sobering to remember that whilst each assembly is responsible to the Lord alone, and that any idea of church federation is unknown in the New Testament, each local assembly is nevertheless *not* at liberty to introduce or allow whatever it thinks fit. In the days of the Judges, "every man did that which was right in his own eyes", with dire consequences. This attitude is *still* a recipe for disaster. We must recognise that apostolic teaching is binding on every assembly: Paul refers to his "ways which be in Christ, as I teach *every where in every church*", 1 Cor.4.17.

Let every believer, whether brother or sister, esteem it great honour and privilege to give glory to our beloved Lord by fully recognising His blessed headship when we gather in assembly capacity.

—to be continued (D.V.)

Be not proud of thy beauty or of thy strength, for a little sickness will deform the one and consume the other.

Donald Ross

MEN OF GENESIS

by J. E. Todd, England

5. Lot and his choices

We have noted that in the book of Genesis the lives of many men of God centre around a single feature. In the case of Lot it was the choices he made.

Lot can be counted as a man in touch with God because he was saved by God from the judgment that fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Also Peter describes him as such, '(God) delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)', 2Pet.2.7. But he was a man whose choices in life became more and more based upon material considerations and less and less upon spiritual. We are warned by his experience to give heed to the text, 'For we walk by faith, not by sight', 2Cor.5.7. This is specially relevant in the materialistic age in which we live.

LOT CHOSE TO ACCOMPANY ABRAHAM

'So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him', Gen.12.14. This was a wise choice to accompany a man of God on a God-directed journey. To join men and women of God on life's journey of faith is excellent, but to rely on them rather than to rely directly upon God and His word can be disastrous. When Abram left the path of faith and went down into Egypt, Gen.12.10-20 and 26.1-3, Lot accompanied him, 'And Abram went up out of Egypt . . . and Lot with him', Gen.13.1. Was it there in Egypt that Lot, the plain-living nomad, fell in love with materialism, the Egyptian way of life?

To receive help and blessing from our fellow Christians is one thing, but to become slavish followers of a human leader is quite another matter. Personality cults arise even among Christians. Such names as John Calvin and J. N. Derby could be named as victims of cult followers, see 1Cor.3.4. The Lord Jesus Christ often said, "Follow Me", He, and He alone is the Person we must follow.

LOT CHOSE THE VALLEY OF JORDAN

Abraham gave Lot the choice as to which way he (Lot) should go. 'Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where . . . even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt', Gen.13.10. Lot made this choice for purely material reasons, ignoring the spiritual dangers of the godless population, v13. Its lush meadows would mean large flocks and herds which in turn would mean great material wealth. But by making material considerations the sole basis for his choice, Lot had set his feet on a very slippery slope. First, he descended into the valley, 'Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east' v11. Then, living in tents, he moved his tent nearer Sodom, v12, R.S.V. Finally, he lived in Sodom itself, 'Lot . . . who dwelt in Sodom', Gen.14.12.

But the material wealth and luxuries of city life were transient. 'They (the conquering kings) took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed, Gen.14.12. For us, our earthly treasures can be transient, consumed by the moths of redundancy and the rust of unemployment. 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where

thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also', Matt.6.19-21.

LOT CHOSE THE CITY OF ZOAR

Rescued by Abraham, Lot failed to learn his lesson and returned to Sodom. Not only to live there but also to participate in the running of that wicked city. 'Lot sat in the gate of Sodom', Gen.19.1. The expression, 'sat in the gate', as equivalent to the modern phrase, 'sitting on the council'. Did Lot hope to improve the morality of the place?

But God could not judge Sodom, even when only one righteous man dwelt there (much less than 10, see 18.32!). So angels were despatched to drag Lot from the city, 'While he (Lot) lingered, the men (angels) laid hold upon his hand . . . and they brought him forth, and set him without the city", v16. The angelic advice was to flee to the hills. "Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed", v17. But Lot chose, indeed he insisted upon, going to the city of Zoar. "Oh, not so, my Lord . . . this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one", v18-20.

To be motivated by material considerations had now become a fixed habit with Lot. It must be a city however small. But the superstitious citizens of Zoar must have looked upon Lot as a bad omen. Would the disaster upon Sodom, his former dwelling place, now visit them? It was no doubt their hostility that caused Lot to fear and depart to the hills. 'Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar, v30. Had he gone to the hills at first, he would have avoided the hostility of the citizens of Zoar, and possibly found husbands for his daughters. But now isolated, drunkenness and immorality followed. A sad end.

'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh (greed), and the lust of the eyes (covetousness), and the pride of life (selfish ambition), is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever', 1Jn.2.15-17.

—to be continued (D.V.)

NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL

by W. F. Laidle (Scotland)

Scripture reveals that from the beginning of human history, natural and spiritual have been fundamentally different and opposing conditions. Cain was opposed to Abel in his response to divine things and this established a principle repeated throughout the Word of God, whether in Jacob and Esau, David and Goliath or the Lord and the Pharisees. Nicodemus was left in no doubt about the gulf between natural and spiritual, Jn.3 and the apostle Paul confirmed it in his letter to the Corinthian church, 1Cor.2.14.

What may not be as readily appreciated is that the same principle is equally applicable to the believer. This is so because he represents the two identities in one body, the flesh or human nature and the divine nature. The one has reference to natural life, the other to spiritual life and both are clearly demonstrated in the

exercise of gifts. The natural gifts common to mankind are exercised by the Christian in daily secular life, whether in employment or the home, but all such skills and abilities of the flesh are excluded from the spiritual sphere of the house of God, where only spiritual gifts apply.

We see, therefore, that the natural and spiritual elements in the believer are quite different and separate, having their own spheres of operation. However, some have thought that the flesh in the believer is dead in secular life as well as in divine purpose, but this fails to distinguish between the different spheres in which the believer is engaged, quite apart from the contradiction of daily experience in which we use the natural abilities of the flesh common to man, 2Cor.10.3. The flesh is, of course, useless so far as divine things are concerned, which is why natural gifts and propensities are excluded from spiritual considerations. Again, some have thought that the flesh is represented only by Gal.5.17-21 but this fails to recognise that the flesh is descriptive of natural man in his totality (Vine).

The testimony of Scripture is also clear in the matter of natural and spiritual. We sometimes hear reference to 'the plain truth of Scripture', as though divine revelation was a simple, straightforward exercise of reading the letter of the Word as a student would read a text book. But spiritual truth cannot be discerned by the natural faculties of man. On the other hand, there is plain truth in the epistles, relating to secular life, that anyone can understand because it is not of a spiritual nature; nothing concealed about that. Not surprisingly, it is this natural aspect of Scripture that the religions of Christendom erroneously perceive to be Christianity. We see, therefore, that Scripture itself testifies to the separate nature of natural and spiritual, an important distinction to recognise if we are to have a proper understanding of the believer's place in the spiritual sphere and in the world and thus of the nature of Christianity.

None of this excludes the fact that being a believer influences secular life, in that different motives and priorities now apply than was the case prior to salvation. Life in the world for the Christian is seen from an entirely different perspective to his fellows, ideally being lived "in the Lord", that is, in subjection to the plain commandments of the Lord relating to natural life; not Christianity but secular life influenced by it.

Another aspect of the believer's life that illustrates the difference between the natural and spiritual spheres is that of kindly deeds. There are the natural deeds of kindness of daily life with which we are all familiar, such as any public spirited person might undertake, including the believer, and there are spiritual goods works that only a regenerate person can perform, Jms.2.21-25. Ideally the believer is engaged in both, whereas the unbeliever can only engage in one because he is separated from things spiritual.

It could hardly be clearer that the world is the sphere of the natural and moral, the scene of the manifestation of the flesh, whether for good or bad, whereas the house of God is the sphere of things spiritual. They are quite separate and the believer has his place in both, alive to the world in the flesh with its varied gifts, abilities and failures and alive to God in the new nature with its spiritual gifts and appreciation of divine things. Scripture makes a clear distinction between these two opposing conditions and so should we, recognising that Christianity is an exercise of spiritual things, not to be confused with the natural considerations of secular life.

THE KINGS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL

by Graeme Hutchinson (Belfast)

Paper 1

With their departure out of Egypt, the children of Israel emerged as a nation in their own right. From the remarks of Stephen recorded in Acts 7 we understand that, during this sojourn, the association with the well-organised Egyptians and the subsequent oppression, served to prepare the Israelites for their future kingdom. As this kingdom belonged to God (Ex. 19.6), it was to be ruled by God Himself and not man - a theocracy. A large portion of the Old Testament records how responsibility for rule was first devolved to Moses (Acts 7.35) then Joshua (Deut. 31.14) and the judges (Jud.2.16), and then under the first three kings - Saul, David and Solomon - the kingdom enjoyed a period of unprecedented growth and development.

The events that led to the establishment of the kings in Israel was a combination of disappointment with the judges and a desire to be like other surrounding nations (1 Sam. 8.1-5). Sadly from the divine viewpoint such a transition was wholly unnecessary, for as the nation was subsequently warned (1 Sam. 8.7-20), the simple form of the previous rule was being exchanged for something more complex and bureaucratic. The record of Scripture testifies to the truth that, just as in other occasions, when man pursues his own path, failure is certain.

The period that concerns this and subsequent papers is when Solomon died and the nation was divided in two - ten tribes comprising Israel in the North and the remaining two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) forming Judah in the South. Figure one outlines the various kings that ruled over the separate nations together with some of the major prophets that served during the period. Figure two represents a summary of the two nations, outlining their respective differences. A brief bibliography is included that outlines material pertinent to the subject and well worth a read!

Therefore as we examine the lives of some of the kings that ruled during this period - all but one within Judah - there are two main objectives. Firstly, by assessing what kings ruled where and when, a better understanding of the Old Testament should be gained. This will be especially the case if figure one in the present paper is retained and cross-referenced with subsequent studies. Secondly, as each king represents individual character studies, it is hoped that numerous and varied practical lessons will be gleaned to help us in our present Christian pathway.

Figure One: Kings of Judah and Israel and the Preexilic Prophets

JUDAH			ISRAEL		
Dates	Kings ¹	Years	Kings	Years	Dates
931-913	Rehoboam	17	Jeroboam I	22	931-910
913-911	Abijah	3	Nadab	2	910-909
911-870	Asa	41	Baasha	24	909-886
873-870	Coregency ² with Jehoshaphat	(3)	Elah	2	886-885
873-848	Jehoshaphat	25	Zimri	7 days	885
853-848	Coregency with Jehoram	(5)	Tibni	6	885-880
			Overlapping reign with Omri	(6)	885-880
848-841	Jehoram	8			
841	Ahaziah	1			
841-835	Queen Athaliah	6			
835-796	Joash	40			
796-767	Amaziah	29			
790-767	Azariah's vice-regency under Amaziah	(23)			
790-739	Uzziah (Azariah)	52			

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Figure Two: The Kingdoms of Judah and Israel

Southern Kingdom	Northern Kingdom
Referred to as Judah	Referred to as Israel
Consisted of two tribes	Consisted of ten tribes
Twenty Kings of mixed characters	Nineteen Kings of evil characters
Capital - Jerusalem	Capital - Samaria
931 - 586 BC (345 years)	931 - 722 BC (209 years)
Invaded by Babylon	Invaded by Assyria

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PAPERS ON PROPHECY

by The Late W. W. Fereday (written in 1897/98)

VOLUME 2

10(c)—Babylon and the Beast

Now let us look into the name and character of the great whore. It is on her forehead; there is no effort at concealment. Names in Scripture are declarative of character. Accordingly in this instance we have corruption unblushingly displayed. Evil as her history has been in the past, there are darker developments at hand. Her full character has not yet been told; but the day of her complete manifestation is near upon us. "And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth", v5.

Satan always imitates the work of God. God has spoken of a "mystery" — Christ and the Church, Eph.3; Satan must needs have a mystery also. So at about the same epoch, when God is about to bring in His King of kings and Lord of lords, Satan brings forward his king of kings in the person of the Beast.

It may be asked, "Why is the false Church named *Babylon*?" It is an interesting but solemn study to gather together from the Old Testament Scriptures the various features that concentrated themselves in the city of this name of old. In Gen.11.1-9, we have its foundation as the expression of man's pride and independence of God; in Gen.10.8-12, in connection with Nimrod it becomes the sea of oppression and violence; later it becomes known for its splendour, even Israel being ensnared, Josh.7.21; and, finally, it was the very centre of idolatry, into which the people of God were carried captive because of their sins and unfaithfulness to God, Isa.46, etc. These are some of the leading characteristics of Babylon in the Word of God. It is exceedingly solemn therefore that when the Spirit of God would select a name whereby to describe the professing Church in its last stage on earth He judged no name so suitable as *Babylon*. The sober and reflecting reader has but to consider and look around, and he will see all these features before his eyes under the holy name of Christ.

There will be no real doubt that *Rome* is here before the mind of the Spirit of God. Two marks are given — one geographical, the other political — which the reader should observe. The woman is said to sit on seven mountains, v9, and stated also to be "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth", v18. Rome, as a seven-hilled city, is well known; her political ascendancy was no less apparent when the vision was vouchsafed to the Apostle in the isle of Patmos.

Papal advocates have frequently endeavoured to turn away the keen edge of this Scripture by applying it to *pagan* Rome, but all to no purpose. It is but to do violence to the Word of God. Better far own the truth of it, and separate from the evil before the judgment falls, ch.18.4. Such is the Divine path for all who really desire to do the will of God.

On the other hand, Babylon must not be *confined* to the papal system. We are firmly convinced that it includes a great deal more. We have heard and read much

of late years about “the reunion of Christendom”, which appears to be the cherished ideal of a very large number of professing Christian people. We believe this will come about yet, but it will be reunion in darkest evil. No doubt, while the true saints of God remain in the world, such a calamity will be averted. Not a few find considerable difficulty in surrendering or sinking all that they believe they have learned from God, and thus a great barrier is raised by conscientious souls against the accomplishment of such a project. But when all the saints are removed to the Father's house, those who remain in the various ecclesiastical systems will doubtless sink their doctrinal and other differences, and unite together for the common weal, as they fondly suppose, in this way will ambitious Rome preside over the religious destinies of Europe once more, with the results that this chapter declares. No thoughtful observer can fail to see that this is the direction in which everything is now tending. The religious bodies are not today where they once were. Things have greatly changed during the last half-century. Doctrines that were regarded as vital realities then are viewed as mere matters of opinion now, to be held or surrendered at pleasure; principles for which earnest men contended and suffered in the past are waived and very lightly regarded today. The various systems are gravitating towards each other in a way that cannot be overlooked or denied. The Established Church is not now divided from Rome by such an impassable gulf as formerly; and the dissenting bodies have followed in her wake to an alarming degree. We are not now speaking of the increased fraternising of Christian men apart from denominational differences, but the gravitation of the various systems towards each other. This, we believe, will culminate in Babylon the Great, fully developed. At least, let the Christian reader pause and consider.

One more mark remains to be noticed before we turn from the vision to the angel's explanation of it: “And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, and when I saw her I wondered with great admiration”, v6. The seer wondered, and well he might! He knew Jerusalem to be thirsty for the blood of the saints, Matt.23.34-37, and at the time of the vision he was suffering under the persecuting hand of pagan Rome, but he was here shown a symbol of the professing Church, and she drunken with the blood of the saints! It has been painfully verified. Pagan Rome slew its thousands, but Christian Rome (so-called) has slain its tens of thousands. What a day of reckoning is at hand! The sighs and tears of the helpless and the suffering have gone up to God. In His book all is faithfully recorded, and the tears are in His bottle. Righteous retribution will yet fall. Babylon will be overthrown and judged, to recover herself no more for ever.

In the interpretation of the vision some important particulars are added (quite a usual thing in Scripture), but the interpretation is chiefly occupied with the Beast. On this we shall be brief, as we remarked on this when dealing with “the times of the Gentiles”. Three things are stated as to the Beast: “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition”, Rev.17.8. That is, it has had a past history, it is at present non-existent, but will yet be revived by Satanic power and energy. Of no power but Rome could this be written. Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece have each had their day and have fallen,

never to rise to an imperial place in the earth again. But Rome will rise once more. The mighty power of the West will be brought together again by Satan just about the time when God will bring his First-begotten into the world.

The Beast's seven heads and ten horns are carefully explained by the angel. The heads have a twofold signification. First, they represent the seven mountains on which the woman sitteth, wherein we recognise the well-known fact that Rome is a seven-hilled city; secondly, "they are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come, and when he cometh he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition", v10-11. "Seven kings", or forms of government. Five had passed away before John's day: kings, consuls, decemvirs, military tribunes, and dictators; the sixth, the imperial, was then in power. The seventh is thought by many to have been the empire of Napoleon I. Satan's aim by his instrumentality was evidently to revive the old empire of Rome, but God's time had not come, so he continued but a short space. The eighth, which is of the seven, we believe, will be the imperial revived. In Rev.13.3, where the same power is before us, the wounded head of the Beast was healed, by which we understand the revival of the imperial authority.

The horns are kings, as the angel tells us: "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet, but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast", v12-13. It is very clear that this is still future. Never in the past did the Roman empire consist of ten kingdoms welded together, as this prophecy plainly describes. In ancient times Rome's vast dominions were under one government, and since the early part of the fifth century it has been in a state of dissolution, and many smaller kingdoms have arisen on its ruins. But in the future ten distinct kingdoms will be cemented together, each retaining its own sovereign, yet all under the general leadership of one head.

—to be continued (DV)

PRESENT AND FUTURE

*Dwelling here in mortal weakness,
Conscious of my human way,
Daily spoiling best intentions,
Needing help Divine each day,
Leaning on Him,
Who has promised strength alway.
One day when I'm in His presence,
When I see those pierced palms,
Gaze upon His feet disfigured,
Prophesied within the Psalms,
Then I'll praise Him,
Throughout all eternity.
When I leave this scene of sorrow,
Know no more of sin and shame,
Changed in body, soul and spirit,
Raised to glorify His Name,
Dwell in glory,
Being part of His own Bride.*

May be sung to CWM RHONDA W. Benyon (S. Wales)

The Jews Scattered

by John B. D. Page (Weston-super-Mare)

14th MAY, 1948

(A Foreshadowing of a Greater Regathering)

When people of various nations emigrate to another country they invariably lose their national identity within a comparatively short period of time and become absorbed into that nation. But that has not happened with the Jews. After nearly 2000 years of worldwide dispersion, despite atrocious persecution and terrible sufferings, the Jews have retained their racial identity. That is an ethnic miracle.

After long centuries of exile in foreign countries many Jews had, 50 years ago, returned to the promised land. That was the time of the rebirth of the nation. Contrary to all expectations, the United Nations voted in 1947 for a Jewish state to be set up. The following year Britain's mandate of Palestine was brought to an end. And so, in that year, on the 14th May 1948 the state of Israel was proclaimed. Never before have people, who have been scattered worldwide for centuries, come together and formed a sovereign state. It is a national miracle.

In the countries of their dispersion, the Jews have adopted the languages of those nations for everyday conversation in business. Consequently, the Hebrew language has been dormant not lost. Although this ancient language was in abeyance for so long, Hebrew has been restored in Israel for speaking and teaching, and adapted to modern technology. Admittedly, English is used for conducting international business transactions. But Hebrew, now revived, is the official language of the state of Israel. That is a linguistic miracle.

Dispersion of the Jews from their homeland, after A.D. 70 when Jerusalem fell to the Romans, meant, for centuries to come, de-population and desolation of the land which was accelerated at that time by the cessation of "the former and latter rains" so necessary for a high yield in the crops, Deut.11.12-17. The centuries passed until the 19th century dawned. In the 1830s only 500 Jews inhabited the land, living in abject poverty, says one writer. That once fertile land, no longer cultivated, had become barren and swampy. In 1855 a few Jewish migrants purchased some land from the Arabs. Others followed. Unknowingly, they were fulfilling Jer.32.43f ". . . fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate without man or beast; . . . Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe (i.e. sign) the deeds, and seal them, . . ." After about 1800 years of no rain, "the former and latter rains" started again unexpectedly in the 1870s. Obviously the Lord was preparing the land for His people to return. With the rise of Zionism towards the end of the 19th century the number of returnees increased, so that by 1900 about 50,000 Jews had returned to Palestine.

In the 20th century, this migration has continued and by the mid 1920s some 150,000 Jews had arrived in the land. Jews in some countries had settled comfortably and were reluctant to leave. But through the prophet Jeremiah 16.16 the Lord had said, "I will send for many fishers, . . . and they shall fish them; and after will I send

for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks". Seemingly, the appalling anti-Semitic persecution in Europe during the 1930s and until about 1945 was the divine means of fishing and hunting the Jews out of these countries. For instance, in the late 1930s a train, full of Jewish refugees fleeing from Nazi persecution, arrived daily at 4.30 p.m. at London's Victoria Station. After the Second World War, 1939-1945, some emigrated to Palestine. When the state of Israel was established in 1948 some 650,000 Jews from 70 countries were living in the land. In more recent times persecution has broken out against them in several countries and this has meant an influx to Israel on such occasions. Overcome with emotion on arrival, many of them have knelt down and kissed the ground. In recent years the writer was told by a Jewess, who had suffered at the hands of the Nazis and escaped, that on disembarking at Dover she stooped, kissed the ground and said "Thank God for England".

Little was said by Moses of this remarkable gathering: "... the Lord thy God will ... gather thee from all nations, whither (He) hath scattered thee", Deut.30.3, but much more was said by the prophets. Through the prophet Isaiah 43.5, the Lord told His people, "I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather them from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back". Although this amazing prophecy was addressed to the people of Isaiah's day, it concerned not them but "thy seed" — a future generation of Jews. As the scattering of a past generation, subsequent to Isaiah's time, was worldwide, so the gathering of a future generation will be worldwide — from "the east", from "the west", from "the north", and from "the south". After many centuries, this is now happening. To date, the Lord has brought them back to the land from more than 100 countries; there are still about as many countries from which they will yet return.

This miraculous gathering of the Jews is expressed in picturesque language when the Lord says, "I will hiss for them", as a shepherd did by playing a reed pipe to call his sheep, "and gather them; ..." Zech.10.8. Not only will the Lord gather His scattered people, but He promises them: "... I will give you the land of Israel", Ezek.11.17, that is, the land of Israel will be a gift from the Lord to them. As this country is described by the Lord as "My land", e.g. Isa.14.25; Jer.2.7, He has the right to make it a gift to His people.

According to Jer.16.15 the Jews will be "brought up ... from the land of the north, and from all lands ... into their land". Strangely, "the land of the north" is signalled out from the numerous countries of their dispersion. It may refer to Russia where some two million Jews are in exile and not permitted to emigrate to Israel except for the occasional few. Not only from the north but "from all lands" which may include countries such as the U.S.A. where six million Jews live, and Britain with its three-quarters of a million Jews, besides other countries where they are reluctant to leave and emigrate to Israel.

This gathering to the land is not of man although men have been used by the Lord, but it is primarily of the Lord Himself as stated in Jer.31.10, "... He that scattered Israel will gather him, ...". This verse indicates clearly that as the scattering of Israel was a sovereign act of God, so their gathering will be to the promised land.

As Christians we are privileged to live in these days of the Jews returning to their land and its significance should not be under-estimated in Jer.16.14-15 "Therefore,

behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither He had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers”, cp. Jer.23.7f. This means Israel's miraculous deliverance from Egypt, so long ago and remembered annually at Passover down through the centuries even to the present time, will be eclipsed by the Lord bringing them from out of the north and all other countries, without exception, into their land given by the Lord to their forefathers.

The Jews are returning to their homeland in unbelief; whilst their spiritual quickening is still future because their full restoration will be in stages as shown in Ezek.37.12,14, where the Lord says to them: “I will open your graves” of exile “and cause you to come up out of your graves” of worldwide dispersion, “and bring you into the land of Israel” for your national restoration. “And (I) shall put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live” spiritually, cp. Ezek.11.17,19; Jer.32.37ff. Surely, the coming day of Israel's salvation will be the answer to Paul's prayer in Rom.10.1, “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved”. Until that day, let us, too, pray for Israel.

Of this remarkable gathering of the Jews from distant lands to their homeland, although a token of the ultimate gathering, we may say as the psalmist did: “This is the Lord's doing: it is marvellous in our eyes”. *(concluded)*

ABSOLUTELY

When a thing is absolutely necessary we leave no stone unturned till we get it. When a thing is absolutely sufficient we are absolutely contented when it is in our possession. But when a thing is absolutely sufficient and also absolutely accessible, a man would be a fool in every meaning of that word if he did not at once secure that thing.

However that “Thing” is a “person” — a Divine Person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is **ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY**:

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”. (Acts 4.12).

Jesus Christ is **ABSOLUTELY SUFFICIENT**:

“Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him . . .” (Hebrews 7.25).

Jesus Christ is **ABSOLUTELY ACCESSIBLE**:

“Come unto Me, all (ye) that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11.28).

“Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out”. (John 6.37).

There is no sadder thing than to lack the absolutely necessary.

There is no gladder thing than to have the absolutely sufficient.

There is no madder thing than to deliberately refuse that which is:—

 Absolutely necessary;

 Absolutely sufficient, and

 Absolutely accessible,

 Which Jesus our Saviour IS.

(Selected)

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (53)

by A. R. Christopherson (Iowa, U.S.A.)

For 18 years of my life, growing up on an Iowa farm, in the favoured country of the United States, Satan had me convinced the attractions of the world and its many bright lights would eventually bring satisfaction. But in the lines of Gal.6.7 I truly had been deceived.

I was born into a home where the gospel and the truth of God were revered. My grandparents on both sides of the family were saved in earlier years and were among the 55 believers who gathered to the Lord's name at the commencement of the Hitesville Assembly in December of 1927. Yet neither my father or mother were saved until the early '70s, many years after my own conversion in 1961. My parents wisely insisted we attend the Sunday School and as a family we seldom missed the Lord's day Gospel meeting. My grandparents could now see the result of Prov.22.6, "train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it". My parents always had a deep longing to know Christ as Saviour which prompted us to travel countless miles when various gospel series were in the area. Along with many believers in the community I had the distinct privilege of having three gospel preachers, Paul Elliott, Leonard DeBuhr and Robert Orr, living within five miles of home. I remember with joy both their testimony before me and soul winning spirit. In addition, five assemblies had been planted within 25 miles of my home. These unlimited privileges often impressed me that the Lord in His wondrous grace had set a hedge around this sinner which was impossible to ignore.

The coming of the Lord often sobered me as I thought of being left while my grandparents and other relatives would be taken. However this often quickly passed as the devil whispered, "what about your friends". Even though the sports world and the applause of the crowd had captivated my interest, the Spirit of God often spoke these words "just where is real satisfaction found?" Because the school cafeteria didn't always supply enough food we frequented the downtown cafe. This short walk made us pass by Paul Elliott's house where I would notice on his garage door "Jesus said, Ye must be born again". This was again a vivid reminder which spoke loudly as I sensed I was running from God. Little did I dream it would be this man who would ask me to share in a gospel series eight years later.

I began to discover during my last year of high school that the close friends were losing their importance. Satan's bright lights which he showed me as a young teenager began to dim and I often had disappointing experiences.

On July 2, 1961 we went as usual to the gospel meeting at Hitesville. There was no gospel series but rather the usual Sunday night meeting conducted by the local brethren. That night Robert Orr spoke on Matt.24 "for ye know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh". It was like an arrow from God which pierced my conscience. After the meeting, my cousin, who was saved a year earlier showed me various verses and before leaving prayed for my salvation. God spoke so

suddenly leaving me broken and troubled. The four years of high school seeking popularity left me with nothing and before God empty for eternity.

I remember thinking that I have played the role of the fool permitting Satan to offer me that which would never satisfy. Three full days passed as I remember reading the Scriptures and different tracts. All seemed to be so dark. That Wednesday night, July 5, 1961, I found myself in Leonard DeBuhr's study as he showed me verses. The simplicity of Lk.19.10 conveyed hope to my darkened mind. I found myself alone reading that text in what was once my pride and joy — my '57 Chevy. For some reason my eye caught only a portion of the verse “the Son of man came to seek the lost”. I had to admit that's just exactly what I was. Lost, friendless and helpless before God. I then read the rest of the verse to discover that the same Man who came for the lost — saves the lost. Right there I caught myself trusting what I had never trusted before. I remember the SUN was setting in the west bringing darkness for another night, but, at the same time the SON was sunshine to my heart. If I had known the hymn I could have sung “I seek no other argument, I want no other plea, It is enough that Jesus died, and rose again for me”.

Only a few weeks elapsed before entering the waters of baptism and then shortly received into the fellowship of the Hitesville Assembly. It all seemed so overwhelming. In such a short period of time brought under conviction of sin, saying goodbye to the attractions of the world and now being linked with people whom I had admired and respected. The following year I was introduced to a young woman who would, in the fall of 1963, be my wife. Little did I know the great blessing and helpmeet she would prove to be in the service of God. Employment had transferred me to the Marion Assembly where we were now in fellowship with 15 instead of 95. This was another turning point in my life which caused me to face responsibility much sooner than I had expected. With stammering lips and trembling knees I finally got my start in worship along with a gospel exercise.

In 1969 Paul Elliott, who gave of his time and patience in working with not only me but others, asked me to join him in a tent series in Walker — a nearby town. After the first week I was convinced I had preached everything there was to preach and wondered how we were ever going to finish. But the Lord gave help and granted joy to finish this five-week series with the salvation of one. Now aware that this work was easier “said” than “done”, I was convinced the work of an evangelist was beyond my ability. However, a short time later we were once more quite active with children's work. Two years later I again joined brother Elliott in another tent series. From then on my involvement in all phases of gospel work increased while working with my brethren in surrounding areas. I remember thinking one day, “Will the Lord push me into the fields that are ripe unto harvest?”

By 1976, going to work each day seemed such a waste. To “rescue the perishing and care for the dying” was the only work that really counted. Lk.12.15 spoke to me often, “Take heed and beware of covetousness for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth”.

The spring of 1978 brought John Slabaugh and Bill Lavery to Marion for a gospel series. We had the joy of having them in our home during these six weeks

when God worked in a marvellous way. Many homes of the believers were blessed with children awakened and saved including our own. But equally as important was the personal counsel these men gave which has been remembered till this day. The next summer I joined brother Lavery in another tent series in Central City. I remember getting alone with God and asking for a definite sign of one soul to Christ which would confirm my exercise toward the Lord's work. God in His grace answered with two souls. But what I hadn't expected was still a resistance of being fully committed to the will of God. Two large conferences were held in 1979 where I sensed the Lord speaking. In addition five responsible brethren, all from different assemblies, had verbally given me their right hand of fellowship. For this I was greatly thankful — yet having the approval from men was one thing, the call from God quite another.

An incident at the factory reminded me of another voice from God during these days of heart searching. A six ton fork-lift crashed into full storage bins exactly where I had been standing not more than 30 seconds earlier. Serious injury would have been inevitable. The question was simple, "Is this a direct message from God?" Brother Slabaugh, whose personal counsel was greatly appreciated, told me often that God was more interested in my availability than my ability.

Never will I forget January 28, 1980, around 10.30 p.m. reading Judges 6 when God's four promises to Gideon became real. God had reminded Gideon in v12 that "the Lord is with thee". In v14 he told him to "Go" and at the end of the verse the third convincing factor was "have not I sent thee?" If there was any doubt v16 reinforced the command, "Surely I will be with thee". This was more than man's approval but a call from God I could not ignore. It was as clear, if not clearer, than the day of conversion years earlier. Unable to sleep I returned to Judges 6 and while reading v34 noticed that Gideon's work was to blow the trumpet.

Two days later I turned in my resignation after 18 years of service. Leaving the factory that last day and the work I had enjoyed, was a lonely feeling and yet I was 100 per cent convinced God would meet every need. Even though there is at times a great sense of failure yet I thank God for thrilling times in the gospel when the Lord Jesus has been glorified, sinners saved and saints encouraged through the blowing of the gospel trumpet.

THY SON

Tune: "BACA" (Just as I am)

*All for Thyself He lived and died,
In love for Thee He self denied,
We and Thyself are satisfied,
With Thy beloved Son,
Thy Son.*

*He on Thyself didst ever feed,
Trusting on Thee to meet His need,
Delighting Thee in every deed,
Thy blest dependent Son,
Thy Son.*

*He every Word of Thine obeyed,
Treading the path before Him laid,
Fulness of grace and truth displayed,
In Thy obedient Son,
Thy Son.*

*Blessing and virtue from Him flowed,
He health and power and peace bestowed,
He bore our grief and sorrows load,
Thy well beloved Son,
Thy Son.*

Matthew J. Cordiner, Kilwinning

Good Tidings from Heaven

AN UNEXPECTED EVENT — TRANSLATION

Sudden events are reported every day in the media. A politician dies, a plane crashes, a bomb detonates, a government falls and we awake to the news that, somewhere in the world, situations have suddenly changed. There is an event which will soon take place and will be reported on the media the world over. This will be when millions of people suddenly, dramatically and unexpectedly disappear! Such a statement may well sound fantastic or as from the realm of science fiction, but, dear reader, it comes from God's word.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God came into this world, born as a babe at Bethlehem around 2,000 years ago. This was not the beginning of Him as a Person, but as a Man. Thus Isaiah recorded, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given", Isa.9.6. Note it does not say a Son was born, but a child. God's Son He was eternally but a child He became at Bethlehem. Why did He come? The answer He gives Himself, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost", Lk.19.10. This is confirmed by Paul the apostle to the Gentiles, "This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief", 1Tim.1.15.

How was He going to save the lost, save sinners? There was only one way and that was by shedding His blood on Calvary's cross and bearing the judgment of God. 1Pet.2.24, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree"; 1Pet.3.18, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God;" Eph.1.6, "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace". Without this mighty atoning work of Christ, no person could ever reach heaven.

Before He returned to heaven, the Lord Jesus promised His own that He would return for them. Jn.14.3, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also". This promise was confirmed by the Holy Spirit through Paul, 1Thess.4.16, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord". Notice this promise is for those who are termed, "you and we". The "you" were the disciples only and the "we" are defined in v14 of the chapter as "we believe that Jesus died and rose again". Thus the Lord Jesus is coming for His own, that is those who have believed on Him for their eternal salvation.

Dear reader, are you among those who can be called His, those who have believed on Him? If not, when this event takes place suddenly and without warning, you will be left for the judgment of God. There will be no second chance for those who have rejected the gospel. Their doom will be sealed and their end in the lake of fire assured. It is no wonder the apostle wrote, "behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation", 2Cor.6.2. He was urgent in his appeal, "we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God".



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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Advisory Editor : A. M. S. Gooding

Editor: B. Currie

Correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to:

The Editor, 49 Glenburn Road, Dunmurry, N. Ireland, BT17 9AN.
Telephone (01232) 621343.

Secretary/Treasurer : William Neill, 109 Lurgan Road,
Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.
Telephone (018206) 24238.

Committee : Tom Armstrong, Thomas Beggs, Ronnie Johnston,
James McKeown, James Moore, Roy Reynolds.

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BEHOLD YOUR KING

(Meditations in Matthew)

by Jim Flanigan (Belfast)

16. The Prophet in Prison (Ch.11)

The charge to the twelve being concluded, our Lord now travels on to teach and preach in other cities. John Baptist, the King's Ambassador, is in prison, and in some despondency. He has heard, in his imprisonment, of the mighty works that were being done by Jesus, and this creates a problem for John. Why, or how, should it be, that he, the King's herald, should languish in prison while others were apparently enjoying a ministry of deliverance? If Jesus was truly the One who was to come why should His prophet be incarcerated in a prison cell? If others were being released from disease and deformity and demon possession, why should not he be released from his bonds? It seemed rational to so wonder.

John sends two of his disciples to Jesus with a rather sad question. "Art Thou He that should come? Or are we to wait for another?" Was this indeed the same prophet who so recently had cried fearlessly, "This is He"? How boldly and confidently by the banks of the Jordan had John pronounced Jesus to be the Messiah, Jn.1.10. How sadly does he ask, "Art Thou He"? Poor John! Is he occupied with self and circumstances rather than with the Lord? And has this introverted occupation created the doubts? How often it is so with ourselves.

Jesus continues in a busy ministry before answering them, cf. Lk.7.20-22. He then bids them go and tell John what they had witnessed. The blind were seeing; the lame were walking; the deaf were hearing. Lepers were being cleansed; the dead were being raised; the poor were hearing the glad tidings. Then, a special word for John, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me". John, prophet that he was, would have been familiar with such scriptures as Isa.35.5-6. The Saviour would have John occupied with that Word, and this in turn would occupy him with the Messiah. Occupation with the Scriptures and with Christ was better than occupation with self and circumstances. It was, and is, the antidote for doubting.

John's disciples having gone, Jesus now addresses the crowds concerning John. John was no reed blowing in the wind, He assures them. Neither was he just another prophet. He was the last of the prophets. He was that messenger of the Messiah predicted by Malachi 3.1, who would prepare the way for the coming of the Christ. There was no one born of women greater than John the Baptist. He was, if they had sense to see it, that Elijah who was to come. As we have earlier remarked, in his dress, in his dwelling, in his diet, and in his deportment, he was Elijah.

But the anomaly was this. John had come announcing the kingdom for which they had been waiting and yet they had opposed John. They had resisted him violently, which meant that those who would enter the kingdom must strive, equally violently, and strenuously make their way into the blessing. It was being opposed with violence. It must be entered with great resolution.

Having commended John, our Lord now turns to upbraid the people. They were an unbelieving generation in spite of all that they had witnessed. They reminded the Saviour of a scene in the market place, of sulking children refusing to respond to the calls of their companions. Some were playing at weddings, some at funerals, as children do, but there were some who would play at nothing. They would neither dance to the piping nor lament at the mourning. So John had come, with sombre notes of warning and of judgment, but they would not respond. Jesus had come, with the sweet strains of love and grace, and still they would not respond. Of the austere John they said, "He has a demon". Of the meek and tender Jesus they complained, "A friend of publicans and sinners". But wisdom is always justified by those that are wise, and in due time both Jesus and John would be vindicated. The Saviour now turns to those privileged cities which had seen His mighty works around that north-west corner of the Sea of Galilee. He pronounces woes upon them. Chorazin! Bethsaida! Capernaum! Today there are only black ruins of all three. Those other three cities, Tyre and Sidon and Sodom would have repented if they had had the privilege of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. In the day of judgment it would be more tolerable for Sodom. These Galilean cities would perish. They would be brought down to hell for their unbelief. These were solemn words from a Saviour who was meek and lowly in heart.

It was a sad movement for the Lord Jesus. He was rejected by the unbelief even of His own city, Capernaum. But He turns from them to His Father and commences His prayer with thanksgiving. He could rest upon the love of His Father and the greatness of sovereignty. "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth". If the wise and prudent of the world could not see these spiritual things well, babes of faith in their simplicity would see and enjoy what the great ones of earth could not. It was a cause for thanksgiving. There was an essential unity and harmony between the Father and the Son. There was an intimacy in love and purpose and it was the prerogative of the Son to reveal the Father to believing hearts.

The Saviour now turns back to the crowd. He extends that sweet and familiar invitation, "Come unto Me". How simple the vocabulary! How sincere the promise, "I will give you rest". Whether it is extended in a gospel context, to burdened sinners, or whether, as some think, it is for the weary servants of chapter 10, the invitation is equally precious, and to both, the promise is rest.

"Take My yoke upon you", He pleads. Service for Him is pleasant. His burden is light. There is rest for the sinner, rest for the saint, and rest for the servant. He is the best of Masters, meek and lowly, and He will surely and suitably reward all labour and toil that has been rendered for Him.

*There is rest for the weary soul,
There is rest in the Saviour's love;
There is rest in the grace that has made me whole—
That seeks out those that rove.
There is rest in the blessed yoke,
That knows no will but His;
That learns, from His path and the words He spoke,
What that loving patience is.*

J.N.D. —to be continued (D.V.)

Assembly Testimony Bible Class

by J. Riddle (Cheshunt)

ESTHER

(1) INTRODUCTION, PART A

Our past studies have been devoted to Bible teaching in connection with the New Testament local assembly, and we prayerfully trust that God will enable us to enjoy, teach and maintain every divinely-given principle and practice. How important it is to recognise “*all* the counsel of God”.

God has given us “richly all things to enjoy” in His word, and in His will, we are now going to turn to the Old Testament. We must never forget that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning”, but large parts of the Old Testament remain unexplored and unappreciated. The book of Esther is far more than a story with a fairy-tale ending, where everybody ‘lived happily ever after’! It is liberally furnished, as we might expect, with spiritual treasure. We might even call it, ‘the prophecy of Esther’. If our studies stimulate further study of the Old Testament, the series will be eminently worthwhile.

In introducing the book of Esther, we should at least consider the following: (1) The position of the book: (2) The providence of God: (3) The purpose of the story: (4) The part of the characters. In this paper, we will consider the first two of these.

1) THE POSITION OF THE BOOK

There are two ways to put the book in context, and we will deal with them in order of importance.

i) The Spiritual Context

Five Old Testament books cover the period of Israel's history after their return from exile in Babylon. They are, of course, the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Ezra, Haggai and Zechariah cover the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem. Nehemiah and Malachi deal with the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, and the following decline.

The book of Esther belongs to the same period, and describes a crisis at the heart of the Persian empire. The Jewish characters in the story evidently chose not to return to Jerusalem, and the unusual character of the book is largely due to this fact. It does not seem unjust to suggest that they belonged to the majority of exiles who once said, “How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land”, but settled down quite comfortably after all. The language of Ps.137 had died on their lips: “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy”, v5-6. Others had turned their backs on Babylon, and returned to “the place which the Lord shall choose to place His Name there”, Deut.16.2, etc. *We must do the same.* The Ecumenical Movement will reach its goal in “MYSTERY,

BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH", Rev.17.5.

ii) The Historical Context

The book can be dated by reference to "Ahasuerus which reigned from India even to Ethiopia..." 1.1. The name "Ahasuerus" was apparently an official name for Persian kings, rather like Pharaoh. There are two other Persian kings bearing the same title. See Dan.9.1 and Ezra 4.6. The Persian king here is better known in history as Xerxes. His reign commenced in BC485, and therefore the events recorded in the book of Esther took place between, approximately, BC483 (see 1.3, "In the third year of his reign") and BC474 (see 3.7, "In the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus"). This means that we can place the book of Esther between the expeditions to Jerusalem led by Zerubbabel and Ezra respectively. In other words, in the sixty years between Ezra chs. 6 and 7.

There is another interesting reference to the reign of Ahasuerus. Ch.2 tells us that Esther "was taken unto Ahasuerus . . . in the seventh year of his reign". So it took something like four or five years to replace Vashti as queen. But why the delay? The answer appears to be that Ahasuerus was engaged in war. A feast of one hundred and eighty days' duration (1.4) almost seems an exaggeration until we discover that it was at this time that the king held a meeting at Susa to make arrangements for the invasion of Greece. Purely as a matter of interest, Xerxes (his Greek name) left Susa for the West in BC481, was eventually defeated at Salamis, and returned to Persia from Sardis in BC478. You won't find all this in the Bible — it will mean a trip to the library! (You'll also discover that he was murdered in BC464 by two of his officers, Mithridates and Artabanus). So it was shortly after his return from the disastrous campaign against Greece, that he made Esther queen.

2) THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

God is not mentioned in the book of Esther, just as He is not mentioned in the Song of Solomon. This is certainly remarkable, since in this short book of 167 verses, there are 192 references to the king, 26 references to his kingdom, and his name, "Ahasuerus", occurs 29 times. The absence of God's Name is quite unbelievable, until we remember that the Jews should never have been in Persia at all. Esther, queen of Persia, was in a totally wrong position for a Jewess, and Mordecai's position in the king's gate was no better. He was quite unpatriotic. We find him sitting, by his own choice, at the gate of a heathen sovereign. Let's face it, neither Esther or Mordecai are particularly saintly in their behaviour.

We have a parallel in the history of Abraham. Read Gen.12.10-20, and you will discover that although God communicated with Abraham both before and after his stay in Egypt, He did not communicate with him whilst he was in Egypt. What's more, there is no record of Abraham communicating with God whilst he was in Egypt. He certainly did so before and after (12.8 and 13.4), but not whilst in Egypt. But God was certainly at work behind the scenes: "the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues, because of Sarai, Abram's wife", v17. So do not expect to hear God's voice, and do not think that you will go on speaking to Him, when you are outside His will. Disobedience silences the voice of God, and silences your voice as well.

God may not be named in the book of Esther, but His hand is constantly seen. Matthew Henry puts it like this: "though the name of God be not in it, His finger is". Vashti was deposed in most unjust circumstances, and the elevation of Esther raises some rather delicate questions. But her uncle was right in saying, "who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this"? 4.14. It was no accident that Mordecai uncovered the plot to assassinate Ahasuerus. It was no accident that the king had a sleepless night before the second banquet. (What a mercy that they didn't have sleeping pills in those days!). On the other hand, just suppose that Vashti had come when ordered by the king. Or suppose that Esther's parents had lived . . . The book of Esther emphasises the providence and sovereignty of God — down to the smallest details.

But don't trade on this. We must never think that to be used by God means divine approval. Just think about Balaam. He said some most sublime things, but he was nothing more than a wizard from Mesopotamia! God in His sovereignty may see fit to use us even when we are in a wrong position. But that does not mean that He endorses our position. See Romans 6.6.

Let's say one further thing in connection with the absence of God's name in the book of Esther. It has often been stated that the Name of God *is* in the book, but in acrostic form. Some authorities tell us that it is actually hidden on five occasions in this way in the original text. On four occasions, the name "Jehovah" occurs in this way, and the name "Ehyeh" (I am that I am) once. This certainly agrees with the character of the book. After all, although God remained hidden, He was working ceaselessly behind the scenes, and it therefore seems appropriate that He should hide His name!

—*to be continued (D.V.)*

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NOT to Assembly Testimony.

MEN OF GENESIS

by J. E. Todd, England

6. Isaac and his Wells

We have noted that in the book of Genesis the lives of many men of God centre around a single feature. In the case of Isaac it was the wells he dug.

The Wells of Wealth

Isaac inherited great wealth from his father Abraham. "The Lord hath blessed my master (Abraham) greatly; and he is become great: and He hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses", Gen.24.35. 'And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac', Gen.25.5. But the preservation and enjoyment of that wealth, in the form of livestock, depended upon an abundant supply of life-giving water. Believers have inherited 'the unsearchable riches of Christ', Eph.3.8. But to enjoy those riches we need to 'draw water out of the wells of salvation', Isa.12.3.

The Philistines filled in the wells which Isaac's father Abraham had dug, realising that this would diminish Isaac's wealth. But Isaac energetically redug those wells, Gen.26.18. In our own day each succeeding generation must 'dig' into the Scriptures, that they might 'with joy . . . draw water from the wells of salvation' for themselves. We cannot live on our forefathers' knowledge and experience of the riches of Christ in the Scriptures. We must acquire that knowledge for ourselves by our own efforts. But the adversary will make every effort to frustrate us from this time-consuming task.

The Wells of Wrangling

'Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. And the herdman of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, the water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek (Contention); because they strove with him. And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah (Enmity), Gen.29.19-21. As Isaac redug the wells he had to face contention and enmity. As we read and practise the Scriptures we do so in a world in which we are surrounded with religious contention and philosophical enmity on every hand. The men of Gerar claimed that the water was their own. How many voices around us claim that 'the truth' is theirs and theirs alone. All shades of atheism, agnosticism and religion would quarrel with the simple believer as he or she simply reads and believes and obeys the Scriptures. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world . . . We (apostles) are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us . . . Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error', 1 Jn.4.1,6. The teaching of the Lord's apostles is found only in the pages of the New Testament, not in the 'Watchtower' magazine or the 'Book of Mormon' or the utterances of so-called 'prophets' and 'prophetesses'.

The Well of Wonderful Blessing

‘He (Isaac) removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth (Room); and he said, For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land’, Gen.26.22. As we **continue** to read and obey the Scriptures the Lord will bring us into a pleasant and spiritually fruitful experience. ‘Happy is the man that findeth wisdom . . . Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace’, Prov.3.13,17. ‘The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (self-control)’, Gal.5.22-23.

The Well of Worship

‘He (Isaac) builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well’, Gen.26.25. At Beersheba, v23, Isaac became fully aware of God's presence with him. The Lord appeared to him and confirmed the Abrahamic covenant with him, v24. Isaac's response was to build an altar and worship God. And there at that place he dug another well.

Worship is one of the wells of salvation. As God reveals to us in the pages of Scripture the new covenant of grace betwixt Himself and us, sealed by the blood of Christ, we respond with worship. This is the purpose for which we were created and redeemed, to worship our Creator and Redeemer, Jn.4.23-24.

The Wells of Witness

That same day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well they had dug, “We have found water”, Gen.25.32. Such was the blessing that Isaac received from God as he continued his well-digging that even his enemies were impressed. Abimelech, who had formerly hated Isaac, was forced to declare, “We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee”, v28. Isaac welcomed them into covenant relationship with himself, ‘And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another’, v31.

If we, as believers, continually ‘with joy . . . draw water from the wells of salvation’, such will be the blessing of the Lord in our lives, that others will take notice. It should be the sheer spiritual quality of our Christian lives that breaks down the indifference of the unsaved around us. So that they, of their own free will, will seek to join with us in following the Lord.

—to be continued (D.V.)

He that would refrain his foot from walking in a forbidden path must first refrain his heart from approving the same.

Donald Ross

* * *

If we do not proportion our giving according to our state, God will proportion our state according to our giving.

J. Douglas

The Kings of Judah and Israel

by Graeme Hutchinson (Belfast)

Introduction (Paper 2)

The period when the nation of Israel was divided and various kings had the responsibility of ruling over the separate kingdoms of Judah and Israel, makes for profitable and compelling study. However, in order to place the series into a proper context and outline the benefits of study, we need to:

(a) ANALYSE THE PERIOD

As a nation, Israel was comprised of twelve tribes each having received their portion of land during the invasion and subsequent occupation of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. Although on previous occasions, there had been visible signs of strain within the nation - 2 Sam. 2.4-9; 2 Sam. 19.41-20.22 - this was exacerbated by the death of Solomon and the actions of his son - Rehoboam.

The Division of the Nation

With the death of Solomon in 931 BC the nation was divided into two kingdoms. In the South there was the nation of Judah - comprising the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and in the North there was the nation of Israel - comprising the remaining ten tribes.

Although a first reading of the relevant passages may indicate that the division was solely the result of man's stubborn and 'pig-headed' nature, the words of the prophet Ahijah in 1 Kings 11.31 would suggest otherwise - 'Take thee ten pieces for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold I will rend the kingdom...'. Thus, as always with this world, situations may appear out-of-control, but our God is in control and His sovereign will must prevail. A comforting thought!

The Variation within the Nation

Despite the two kingdoms originating from the same source, their history was to prove very different. Figure two (see paper 1) illustrates that regarding Israel, the various kings - nineteen in total - were all of an ungodly character, whereas the case of Judah (twenty) was more mixed. The period of time that elapsed during their existence was also different. For Israel it lasted from 931 BC until 722 BC - over 200 years, whereas Judah had a more prolonged history of almost 350 years (931 BC - 586 BC).¹ Moreover, the agent that was used to bring the two kingdoms into captivity was different - for Israel it was Assyria (2 Kings 17) and for Judah it was Babylon (2 Kings 25).

Such differences, whether national or otherwise, have always been a feature of mankind. The one desire that God has for us is that we should be found amongst those who are reckoned - by Him - to be good.

The Description about the Nation

In terms of the Biblical record covering the period, the vast part of the narrative is found in the historical books of Kings and Chronicles. The latter focuses primarily

on the Southern Kingdom of Judah and especially on the importance attached to the temple. Figure one (see paper 1) also indicates the role of the prophets during the period and many notables such as Isaiah (2 Chron. 32.20; Isa. 1.1); Jeremiah (2 Chron. 35.25); Amos (Amos 1.1); Hosea (Hosea 1.1); Micah (Micah 1.1) and various others, all supplement the records found in the historical books.

Therefore, just as with any part of Scripture, it is necessary to cull information from various books in order to understand the period and principles surrounding the various kings of Israel and Judah.

(b) ASSESS THE CHARACTERS

Amongst the many positive features regarding a study of the kings of Judah and Israel, the relevant passages provide a rich variety of personalities and characters. For instance, in our studies we have the opportunity of considering:

The Failure of the Kings

Without exception, each king of Israel and Judah was marked by failure and sin. For some like Hezekiah and Josiah, it was minimal, whereas with others, such as Ahab, their character was more sinful and ungodly. Although we can identify with, and derive some comfort from the failure of others, it is worthwhile to contrast each king with that of the Lord Jesus Christ. In a coming day when He reigns on earth, He will be a King who is incomparable. Heb. 1.12 records of the Saviour, ‘.. but thou art the same and thy years shall not fail’.

The Courage of the Prophets

As the means through which God spoke to His nation, the prophets were sometimes called to perform tasks of great courage and personal resolve. When we read of men such as Shemaiah (2 Chron. 12.5) and Hanani (2 Chron. 16.7-10) we are conscious that despite any personal *fears*, they confronted kings and endeavoured to bring them back into alignment with God’s way and will. For a prophet such as Jeremiah, his work led to *tears* as he lamented over the loss of a good king and the decline into wilful sin by the nation (2 Chron. 35.25). Although able to identify with the failure of the kings, it would be more commendable to have the characteristics of the Prophets - to labour for God despite personal *fears* and inevitable *tears*.

The Faithfulness of the Priests

Whilst the role of the prophets was that of *revelation*, in that they were charged with the responsibility of telling forth the consequences of rebellion, the role of the priests was mostly *representation* in nature. They stood between God and His people and men such as Jehoida (2 Chron. 24.2) and Azariah (2 Chron. 26.17) were characterised by faithfulness, in that they maintained the truth of God. With New Testament teaching, every believer is a priest (1 Pet. 2.4-5) and thus it is vital for us, especially in this age, to replicate the example set by the aforementioned - maintain the truth of God and keep faithful to Him.

The Influence of the Relatives

Irrespective of our background or position in life, we all possess the power to influence others - for good or bad! In the relevant passages, certain relatives are singled out as making a significant influence on the Kingdom. For instance, in 2 Chron. 22.10 the king’s death (Ahaziah) had opened the way for his mother -

Athaliah - to murder many of her own flesh and blood. An influence for bad! An opposite example is found in the succeeding verse (v11) where Jehoshabeath - a sister of the deceased king - protects her nephew (Joash), who subsequently reigns under the godly influence of his uncle - Jehoiaada. An influence for good!

Within the family circle, we all have relatives. Is our influence - in the spiritual sense - for good or bad?

(c) APPLY THE LESSONS

Rom. 15.4 records that 'whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning...'. Therefore, we do not require a special formula to transform the record of the various kings into some relevant and up-to-date format - much the reverse. The passages are full of lessons that can help us in our service for the Lord. The following are only some of the more prominent:

The Need for Consistency

Kings such as Rehoboam are the archetypal examples of inconsistency. One moment he was obeying the Lord (2 Chron. 11.17) the next he was being disobedient (2 Chron. 12.1). On the other hand, chart the record of Josiah's life who was a much more steady king - 2 Chron. 34.1, 3, 8; Ch 35.19. The Lord desires those who, like the early Christians, 'continue(d) steadfastly' (Acts 2.42).

The Possibility of Conversion

Although Manasseh commenced his reign very badly - 2 Chron. 33.2 - he was brought under affliction by the Lord and so was compelled to change his ways (v12-13). We can take comfort from the fact that irrespective of our spiritual condition, we can change for the good - given the love and long-suffering nature of God.

The Importance of Communion

Certain kings such as Asa, when confronted by problems, sought the help of other people rather than approach the throne of heaven (2 Chron.16.12). A much wiser example to follow would be that of Hezekiah, who sought the Lord in earnest prayer (2 Chron. 30.18; 32.20, 24).

The Danger of Complacency

One feature that can be traced throughout the majority of the kings is that when they achieved great victories in battle, or when they gained the respect of neighbouring countries, they fell into sin. One example would be that of Uzziah. It was only when he began to survey and enjoy his strength, that Uzziah departed from the ways of God (2 Chron. 26.16). The warning of 1 Cor. 10.12 is appropriate - 'Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall'.

The Need for Correction

Given the works and desires of various kings, it was necessary for God, on occasions, to raise up men who would confront them with their errors. The stature of the king can be observed in the way that they responded to the correction. For instance, with the case of Asa he responded with *anger* when he imprisoned the servant of God (2 Chron. 16.7-10). For Jehoshaphat his response was more of *acceptance*, when he sought to put matters right (2 Chron. 19.2-4). A good measure of our spirituality is to assess how we respond to valid and necessary correction.

The Peril of Compromise

With the nation divided into two separate Kingdoms, and with the North pursuing a godless way of life, it is sad to observe how various kings of the South became entangled with them. The implication of the union between Jehoshaphat and Ahab was disastrous, and certainly had a legacy that lasted well beyond their deaths (2 Chron. 21.1-4). The counsel of the Apostle Paul is most wise - 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?' (2 Cor. 6.14).

The Difficulty of Commitment

When the nation departed from God, it was difficult for any king to stand for the truth, and yet this was what they were instructed to do - Deut. 17.20. Josiah was one king who appeared to be singled out for praise in this respect (2 Chron. 34.24-28). Being godly in this world is necessarily difficult as we live in a godless environment, however, to be so is to follow after God (1 Pet. 1.15-16).

Many other practical lessons will emerge from our consideration of the kings of Judah and Israel. However, in the next paper we begin by examining the *instruction* to the kings - Deut. 17.14-20 - subsequent to which we assess the *integrity* of the various kings of Judah and Israel.

See paper 1 for details of Bibliography/Figures

¹ Dates are taken from: 'A Survey of Israel's History', by Leon J. Wood, Zondervan (1986).
—to be continued (D.V.)

PAPERS ON PROPHECY

by The Late W. W. Fereday (written in 1897/98)

VOLUME 2

10(d)—Babylon and the Beast

The harlot, then, will ride the beast. This is not true at the present moment, but Babylon will attain to this once more. The pontiffs chafe now because of their limited political power as compared with the past ages, and are always intriguing in order to possess more. Their dreams and desires will be abundantly realised at the time of the end, though but for a short space.

The harlot meets her judgment from those whom she has ruled. Weary of her charms, themselves being saturated with infidelity (rapidly working today), they turn upon her and destroy and despoil her: "And the ten horns which thou sawest and the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled", v16,17. We quote here from the Revised Version. "*And the beast*" is correct, not "*upon*". The Beast, the imperial chief, and his satellite kings will be of one mind in their outburst of indignation and rage against the harlot. Superstition will fall before infidelity, never to have a resurrection. This will be

disestablishment with a vengeance. All profession of the name of Christ will be abandoned, and the great wealth of Babylon seized and appropriated by the rulers of Christendom.

But though her fall will be brought about instrumentally by means of the powers of the world, the hand of God is in the matter. He has a long score to settle with the great corruptress and bloodthirsty persecutress of His saints. God's side of the affair is shown in ch.18, and this explains ch.17, which tells us that "God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will". In ch.18.1,2 we read, "After these things, I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird", etc.

Jerusalem of old met her doom at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, but God was in it, and so here. God will permit the lawless hands of men to despoil and crush the whore, but it is His hand nevertheless. There is a solemn sequel to this overflow. Flushed with their achievement, the Beast and his confederates will turn upon the Lamb at His appearing, to their own ruin, it need hardly be said, ch.17.14.

The summons to "come out of her" has puzzled many readers of these chapters. We believe the Spirit of God intended the call to have influence with the people of God at all times, and not merely at the time when all is in process of fulfilment. Thus, wherever the anointed eye of the saint discerns any of the features of Babylon, it is incumbent on him to depart out, that he may have no fellowship with her inquiries, and so be clear of her plagues. "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity", 2 Tim.2.19

The downfall of Babylon fills the kings of the earth — *i.e.*, those outside the Roman empire — with sorrow and dismay. Their bitter lamentation is vividly described by the Spirit of God in Rev.18.9-14. The merchants and the shipmen take up the wail also: 'And they cast dust on their heads and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate'. Well may they weep and lament. The grievous departure from the simplicity of the apostolic upper room has caused the false Church to be the best customer the traders of the world ever had. But this, when once overthrown, will never be restored; her ruin is final and irrevocable.

A mighty angel significantly took up a great millstone in the presence of the seer and cast it into the sea saying, "Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all". Israel, on the contrary, after her long career of evil, will be restored by God to His favour in sovereign grace and mercy.

Heaven and earth are at utter variance as to all this, as, alas about many other things besides. While earth is bemoaning the ruin of the splendid harlot all heaven is filled with rejoicing. "Alleluia" resounds through the courts of heaven that so foul a blot has been at last removed from before God, that so great and long-standing a dishonour to His truth has been brought to an end. The marriage of the Lamb follows, to the joy of God and His saints.

—to be continued (D.V.)

Characteristics of Declension (Judges Chap. 5) and

Some Suggested Remedies (Eph. Chap. 6)

by D. S. Parrack, Somerset, England

PART 1

The Psalm of triumph known familiarly as ‘the song of Deborah’, though it was in fact sung in concert with Barak, is one of the most eloquent and descriptive passages in Scripture. Not only is the narrative superbly graphic, it also embraces a vast range of style, from the cuttingly sarcastic contempt for the ditherings of Reuben to the outright anathema pronounced on Meroz, and its inhabitants “because they came not to the help of the Lord” (v23).

Outstanding as it is judged purely on literary merits, the song is of infinitely more value to believers for the spiritual lessons it contains. The time in which it is set has many parallels with our own and we must remember that, “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” Rom.15.4.

Hope was in somewhat short supply in Israel at that time. The original occupation of Canaan had been achieved by the rapid deployment of infantry. Horses, either as cavalry or chariots, would have been near useless during the wilderness wanderings and skirmishes. Now they were faced with an enemy who could field nine hundred iron chariots and who, in consequence, was seemingly invincible. The enemy oppression lasted for twenty long weary years (see Jud.4.3).

There were four things characterising Jabin's overlordship of Israel which are prevalent amongst God's people today during times of declension and low spiritual ebb.

Firstly, “In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied and the travellers walked through by ways” (v6). Even though there were a few individuals who stood firm for their God, things generally were in such a state of disorder that it was no longer safe to travel by main roads. Since there was no recognised and capable authority to keep open the main lines of communication, by dealing with those who caused disruption, the only available course was to move surreptitiously by devious routes.

Unfortunately this is only too often the situation in which we find ourselves today. Those truths upon which companies of believers have been founded and built up over the years, are open to attack, sometimes from the most unexpected quarters. It is not considered safe even to refer to certain matters for fear of causing offence to one faction or the other. The easiest course being to let such subjects drop quietly out of sight for the sake of so-called harmony.

Paul was surely not merely stating what he himself had done, but showing the Ephesian elders what they should be doing when he said, “I have not shunned to

declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20.27). Peter was not content with just having taught certain truths in the past. “Yea I think it meet” he says, “as long as I am in this tabernacle to stir you up by putting you in remembrance”. He was not afraid of being accused of pushing personal views for he continues confidently, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Pet.1.13-16). Samuel, conscious though he was of the continuous backslidings of Israel, could say, “Ye have done all this wickedness, yet turn not aside from following the Lord — I will teach you the good and right way” (1 Sam. 12.20-23). Isaiah speaks of a highway where, “The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein” (Isa.35.8). The teaching of Scripture is plain and simple to those prepared to accept it and to walk in obedience to it. The way is often made difficult by those wanting to take short-cuts, bypassing truths which they find unpalatable. In so doing they not only go astray themselves but cause others to do so as well. Remember the exhortation to the Hebrew Christians, who were doubtless under much pressure to follow a seemingly easier course, “Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way” (Heb.12.12-13). There will always be some to whom the journey seems harder, but, “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves” (Rom.15.1). There is always too, the possibility of an individual being sidetracked, but James says, “Brethren, if any of you (notice it is not “any of them”) do err from the truth and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (Jas.5.19-20). We are warned by the apostle, “Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise” (Eph.5.15), remembering that “Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life” (Matt.7.14), but for once our feet are set firmly in that way, “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov.4.18).

The second indication of Israel's low state was that, “The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel” (v7).

In the days of the patriarchs, the economy of the area enabled them to lead a nomadic life. By the time the redeemed Israelites returned to Canaan however, conditions had changed a great deal. The land was more densely populated, new urban areas had developed and it was now far more difficult for a single family unit to be self sufficient. The larger grouping of at least a village community was necessary with varied trades and skills, disparate but complementary, meeting the needs of all the inhabitants. Such communities could be virtually independent of those outside its bounds, whilst still maintaining amicable relations with them, but the individuals of which it was composed were mutually dependent on each other.

As in the later oppression by Midian when, “The children of Israel made the dens which are in the mountains, and caves and strongholds” (Judges 6.2) the pressure exerted by Jabin caused the breakdown of much of the collective life. It might well be that a handful of folk hidden away in the caves of the wilderness were less vulnerable to the more direct attention of the nation's conquerors, but what a barren and unfruitful existence, how far removed from the promised enjoyments of “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex.3.8).

In the mind of the Lord, as expressed in Scripture, there is no conception of believers living out their lives in spiritual isolation. "God setteth the solitary in families" (Psa.68.6) and we are expected as brothers and sisters, to form a spiritual family in the local assembly. Paul speaks to Timothy of "The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim.3.15). In the context there can be no doubt that he is speaking of the local church, referring to it as that which is the expression of God's truth, the pillar upholding and the ground, or base, establishing. Individual believers not associating themselves with a local company, and we are not here referring to partisan labels, automatically cut themselves off from many of the present enjoyments of their faith. In every local church is a diversity of gift and enablement, dispensed by the Holy Spirit for the mutual comfort and building up of all, each individual fulfilling the role for which they have been specially fitted by that same blessed Spirit. No single member can be dispensed with by the others, for there exists a mixed need which can only be met in fullness by each member making his or her own spiritual and practical contribution. This does not mean being a mere nominal member as though the local church is some kind of dormitory suburb where we have an address but at which we spend just a few passing hours between the far more important periods of business or academic life. It does not mean attendance just at the breaking of bread, nor indeed being present at all assembly meetings, though we are of course warned against, "forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is" (Heb.10.25). It demands a whole hearted allegiance, a full hearted fellowship, with all activities and a preparedness to cheerfully and willingly fulfil even the humblest task that benefits the company as a whole.

The sorry scattered state continued, "Until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel" (v7). The fact that a woman was used to stir up the men is evidence both of the tremendous influence that can be exerted by a godly sister and of the total disorder of God's people which made her public activity necessary. It is at best foolishness, and at worst duplicity, to attempt from this incident to dispute the clear and precise teaching of the New Testament as to the position reserved for sisters in the local church. This does not however diminish one iota the praise due to Deborah for the courage and determination which she demonstrated. It is not to such virtues which she herself lays claim. She is far more concerned with caring for the people of God as "a mother of Israel". There is great need and scope for such an attitude of heart today. Whilst we tend normally to think of the responsibility of elders in connection with caring for the believers, it is a sphere of service in which we all ought to engage. One function of the assembly is, "that the members should have the same care one for another" (1 Cor.12.25). Where such mutual care and concern exist, it will show itself in love and affection, ensuring that the company as a whole is built up and nourished and that it is, in consequence, much better able to maintain an effective outreach testimony. It is sad when we see those professing to be leaders in local assemblies taken up with almost every other activity than the nurture and care of the believers. A company which is taught in the Scriptures and encouraged in real fellowship together is automatically an assembly which will be strong in its gospel witness.

— to be continued (D.V.).

The BELIEVER and the BIBLE

by H. W. Graham (Eiré)

Your most valuable possession is the Bible. Pity is that so many have only a dusty copy on a shelf and live in spiritual poverty because they neglect their treasure-store. To help them to appreciate it we give a few hints.

Get a good-sized copy with readable print. You can choose between a well-bound edition which will last for years or a cheaper one that you can replace when it is worn. A Bible without notes is preferable. It is difficult for the average person to free himself from their influence.

Remember that the Bible is the Word of God, it is God-breathed, 2 Tim.3.16. Learned Biblical scholars can produce many reasons for accepting it as such. There is a mode of proof within the reach of all. Read it prayerfully and if God speaks to you through it, it is evidently His word.

READ THE BIBLE TOTALLY. You may have read Ps.23 scores of times and Matt.23 not even once. Some try to live on a diet of promises, others on a diet of precepts. You need the whole book for a balanced diet. If you read five chapters each Sunday and three every weekday you will just about get through the Bible in a year. So adopt some simple system of consecutive reading. Read it with discernment. All is not addressed to everybody. Sinners are not told to work out their own salvation. Christians are not commanded to bring animal sacrifices. Jews were not commissioned to observe the Lord's supper. Notice to whom and in what circumstances a book or an epistle is written. Don't be alarmed about "so many interpretations", read it for yourself and read it simply. The writer was once questioned about his interpretation of a certain passage. On declaring his point of view the questioner objected that it was far too simple, there must be a hidden meaning. Read each text in its context. Don't try to understand a few isolated words. Take the whole passage and see what the subject is.

READ THE BIBLE DEVOTIONALLY. You need to hear daily the voice of God for the feeding, refreshing and reviving of your own soul and your spiritual life. Only in the Bible can you hear His voice.

READ THE BIBLE DOCTRINALLY. You need to learn divine truth. God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth, 1 Tim.2.4. Faith in Christ saves. The knowledge of the truth establishes and confirms the believer. For growth and usefulness it is essential to have a good understanding of the fundamental truths of the gospel. We would not be prone to saying that such and such a chapter is the most important in the Bible, but we would venture to affirm that without a good grounding in Gen.3 there will be little progress. Only a clear perception of what the fall of mankind involves can permit a clear appreciation of the gospel. Only against the background of man's ruin can we appreciate the wonder of divine grace, the value of Christ's atoning death, the necessity of the new birth,

the need of the Holy Spirit's operation in order to effect conversion, and the fulness of the salvation which God provided to meet our need. One finds that most fundamental errors are due to defective views on the fall.

READ THE BIBLE PRACTICALLY. You need guidance and instruction about Christian living. For every department of life, light can be found in the guide book. Family affairs, business matters, your relation to such things as trade unions, employers' federations, political organisations, church connections, Christian service — on all these and for all else a search of the Scriptures will give true guidance. You may not always get a direct command or prohibition but you will get insight into the mind of God. The writer was once perplexed about the right or wrong of participating in certain celebrations. One day he saw in a catalogue the announcement of a booklet dealing with that very subject. He neither bought the booklet nor did he ever read it. The title was enough: "My Lord has not told me to do it". That and many another problem has been solved by the same principle. It is wisdom to refrain from that which the Lord has not commanded.

READ THE BIBLE OBEDIENTLY. That is the great secret of growth in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. If God makes known to you some truth and you refuse to submit, you shut off the entrance of further light. You may even lose the light you already have. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams", 1 Sam.15.22. It is sadly true that some Christian workers, just like the Romish priests, are afraid of people reading the Bible for themselves. They are afraid to say to young Christians: "Search the Bible and do what it says". They fear the result. A friend of the writer was diligently reading his Bible a few days after his conversion, and was advised not to read the Bible too much. In surprise he inquired the reason and was informed that those who get saved and read the Bible leave the church.

What about helps to the understanding of the Bible? One is grateful for all the help received through books and magazines, but truth must be assimilated into one's own spiritual being. There seems to be a real sense in which every student must start at the beginning and build up his own store of knowledge. That is why there is no really rapid course of study which can make one an efficient minister of the New Testament. No Bible School or Training College course can do it. The Bible cannot be learned that way, but by quiet study in the presence of God. That is the only knowledge worth having, but God is not in a hurry, He takes time to train His servants.

The Bible is sufficient and needs no supplement of human tradition. By it "the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works", 2 Tim.3.17. It is not a text book of theology. One cannot read up the chapter that deals with the Trinity, for example, and master that subject. To learn of the Trinity one begins at Gen.1.1 and finds material on the subject right through to Rev.22. So with every other subject.

Young believer, if you want to live for God, and be a vessel unto honour meet for the Master's use: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth", 2 Tim.2.15.

THE BEGINNING: OF WHOM

by John B. D. Page (Weston-Super-Mare)

In opening his Gospel, John looks back to the remote past when he says "In the beginning . . ." He starts his First Epistle by looking back to the recent past by saying, ". . . from the beginning . . ." These two introductory phrases relate to a Person presented impersonally as "the Word" who is God and He becomes Man. In the West, it seems strange for someone impersonal to be divine and human. But not in the East where John who, according to tradition, was writing from Ephesus, realised that the Greeks used the word *logos* translated here as "Word" for a supernatural appearing of a god. As a Jew, he knew that in the Old Testament "the Word" is sometimes personified for executing the will of God, as for instance in Ps.107.20 "he sent His word, . . ." and 147.15 ". . . His word runneth very swiftly". With the psalmist the personification of the "word" is poetical, but with John it is historical as he presents a Person named "the Word".

"In the beginning was the Word, . . ." says John in his Gospel where he may be alluding to Gen.1.1 when a creative act was done but here states that a Being then already existed. "In the beginning", that is to say, 'At the first moment of time' - "was the Word", indicating He did not then come into existence but He existed before time began. Time has a beginning, but "the Word" has no beginning. As He was pre-existent to time, He is eternal in His Being. During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus spoke in prayer of being with His Father "before the world was", Jn.17.5 by which He meant that before the world was created He existed. Of Christ's pre-existence, Paul says in Col.1.17, "He is before all things", meaning He was antecedent to creation.

Continuing, "and the Word was with God", says John. This statement means more than 'an association with God' but it denotes 'a close relationship with God' and being a distinct Personality within the triune Godhead. Having said that, "the Word" was neither inferior nor superior to God but He was equal with God. On one occasion the Lord Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work". This angered the Jews who sought to kill Him for "making Himself equal with God", Jn.5.17f. Significantly, the Lord Jesus did not deny their charge. His co-equality with God is in harmony with the Scriptures.

Furthermore, "and the Word was God". This statement does not imply His Deity was relevant to only the distant past. This is evident from the imperfect tense of the verb 'to be' translated (for the third time in this first verse of chapter 1) as "was", conveying the thought of 'was, is and ever will be'. Therefore, "the Word", was "God" in the Eternal past, still *is* throughout the span of time, and *ever will be* in the ages to come. In saying that He was "God" does not mean He was a mere attribute of the Godhead or was God'. But it denotes He is truly and essentially God, infinite and perfect, and eternally God.

Re-affirming that the Word was "in the beginning", 1.2, John says what He then *did*: "All things were made by Him . . .", which means the heavens and the earth

besides all celestial and terrestrial beings owe their existence to Him. Then the writer continues “. . . and without Him was not anything made that was made”, 1.3, which means everything without exception, both animate and inanimate, was made by Him.

From the beginning of time, John turns to “the fulness of time”, as it is said to be by Paul, when “the Word became flesh, . . .” 1.14,R.V. “The Word”, existing from eternity, became Man! “The Word”, essentially eternal, became temporal. In so doing, He did not assume a body, or enter into an existing body. His body was not created but “prepared”, Heb.10.5 by super-natural conception and a natural birth, Matt.1.20f. And so, “God was manifest in the flesh”, having two natures, the one divine and the other human, but one personality. He has not now set aside His garment of flesh. But as He is eternally God, so He became Man in time and is for eternity.

A few decades after Pentecost the real Manhood of the Risen Christ was denied by Gnostics who said He was merely a phantom and so John wrote his First Epistle to correct this gross error. “That which”, referring to Christ impersonally as these heretics did, “was from the beginning” — not “*in* the beginning” but “*from* the beginning”. This means not from the beginning of time or creation and not even from the beginning of His Manhood which was not disputed like His Godhood during His earthly ministry, but as the context shows, from the beginning of His exaltation which commenced with His resurrection from the dead.* The reality of the Risen Christ's humanity is proved by the experience of the writer and his contemporaries in four ways: “that which we have heard” — He was audible; “that which we have seen with our eyes” — He was visible; “that which we have looked upon” — contemplatively; “and our hands have handled” — He was tangible. Such indisputable evidence was “concerning the Word of life”, 1.1 R.V.

In proving the reality of the Risen Christ's physical body, as stated so concisely in this opening verse of his First Epistle, John and other disciples were told, according to Lk.24.39, by the Risen Lord, “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have”. This they did, John says in his Epistle. Admittedly a problem arises when the Lord Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, “Touch Me not; . . . Jn.20.17. This was not a general prohibition because He said on a later occasion to Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: . . .” Jn.20.27. Scripture is silent whether Thomas did, but he had the opportunity to satisfy himself that the Risen Lord was not an apparition and that His resurrected body of flesh and bones was tangible and real.

The Risen Christ, Who is “the Word of life”, is life which is eternal and able to impart eternal life to others.

As the hymn writer says:

*Eternal Word, eternal Son!
The Father's constant joy,
What Thou hast done and What Thou art
Shall all our tongues employ:
Our life, our LORD, we Thee adore,
Worthy are Thou for evermore!*

[*Most commonly interpreted as referring to the beginning of the Lord's public ministry — Ed.].

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (54)

by D. C. Howard (Canada)

I was raised in an assembly-orientated home. My mother was saved in Ottawa where my father-to-be first met her and by whom he first heard that he needed to be saved. Through dear brother Thomas Shields of that city, a work-mate, he was reminded often about his soul during lunch breaks. Years later when having meetings in Ottawa with the small assembly, and Mr. Shields was still continuing, I was made to reflect on the words of the wise man: "Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not". My father was eventually saved in Montreal alone in his room where he boarded, while his room-mate was at "the show", and as he often used to say: "Sitting in an old rocking chair at 450 Bleury Street" through the invitation of Matt.11.28. He said that if someone came in at that instant and asked him for the Bible reference he could not have told it. My parents were married in Montreal and enjoyed assembly fellowship there, and in that city this sinner was born February 6, 1915, and my younger brother a year and a half later.

The family moved to Toronto in 1919 and there I grew up. In those years the family walked to meetings over a mile each way. Regularly, every Sunday afternoon, we children walked over to the Bracondale hall for Sunday School as it was closer, and was an outreach work of the Central assembly where my folks were in fellowship. Brethren Patrizio, McBain, and others worked that district. A gospel meeting, and prayer meeting were also carried on there.

Conviction of sin was chronic with me for years, but one Sunday night entering that Bracondale hall, I recall so distinctly feeling miserable but least of all expecting that I would be walking out "a new creation in Christ Jesus". It was May, 1930, and a sincere young preacher (John Spreeman, of Quebec) whom I was hearing for the first time, shot an arrow from his quiver, as directed by the blessed Spirit: "How do you know", he said, "but the instrument of death that will usher you into eternity may be already running the streets of Toronto"? I pictured myself walking home from that meeting (no car) daydreaming while attempting to cross a street; the driver of an on-coming car also daydreaming, striking me and killing me and my soul in HELL — LOST FOREVER. I felt the weight of the awful sin of rejecting Christ and hearing God saying: "It's your last chance". I could not stand the thought. I planned to tell the preacher on the way out of that meeting that I wanted to be saved (music to a soul-winner), but my father shocked me by doing what he had not done before. Rising from his seat next to me he leaned over and said: "What about it, Doug"? I broke at once and was glued to my seat. Later in my father's home, Mr. Spreeman chuckled as he recounted that night. "Anyone could do what I did that night — I only read two scriptures and you were saved". They were John 3.16 and John 5.24. Upon reading the second scripture the second time at my request, with courage brother Spreeman dared to make one simple comment on "Verily, verily" — it was "Truly, truly" and immediately I saw it was all really true, God DID love

me, Christ DID die for me, and I was WELCOMED BY THE LORD.

The date was May 18th. One month later, to the day, I was baptized and ten days later received into assembly fellowship at the Central Gospel Hall, Toronto, then at the corner of Brunswick and Sussex Avenue. Soon I found myself with Christian young men in open air meetings, as many as three a week in various locations throughout Toronto. During the winter months for some years, on alternate Saturday nights, in the basement of the Central Hall (by then located at 25 Charles Street E.) I attended, with possibly a hundred more, the J. R. Littleproud Young Men's Bible class which I found to be of great help.

When 21 years of age, I realised I was now a man and must think for myself and not necessarily follow blindly the movements of others. Also, I felt that preaching in the open air, teaching Sunday School, speaking in cottage meetings, or even preaching inside the Hall, I was only going through motions. There should be results. One day it occurred to me that I must not TRY to preach. I must tell it as from my innermost conviction, regardless of petty outlines, and look Heavenward so that God's truth passed on verbally, would be blessed. This revolutionised my preaching in such a way that at open air meetings crowds would stop and gather to listen. Other Christians noticed, and more than one would ask me if I ever thought of the Lord's work. Even this was not enough. I would have to have HIS approval. It was a thrill when in December 1988 I received a letter from a man in California stating that 50 years ago from the date of his letter he was saved in a meeting I shared with my old Sunday School teacher and a friend (three of us).

In 1938 "The growth of a Soul" by Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor impressed me. Biographies of big exploits left me crippled, whereas the one just mentioned strengthened my faith. I began putting God to the test, or rather myself to the test. Then at every ministry meeting I attended through 1938-39 I was convicted that the Spirit was dealing with me and I was accountable.

In the summer of 1939, about three months after the assembly in Bracondale was formed in which I chose to fellowship, brother Wm. G. Smith, who from time to time visited Toronto, came to Bracondale on a visit. I thought he was in Nebraska. (We had preached in his tent the previous year during vacation time). After meeting this time he asked me when I would get my vacation. "Next week" I answered. His next question was, "Where are you going"? My reply was: "I have no plans". His third question was: "How long do you have?". I answered to the effect that it was open-ended. "Fine, brother, you better come with me". He took me to Nebraska (1100 miles away) and I was gone from home five months, returning with five dollars and no debts, but not yet having commendation from my brethren. I well remember that first gift which was handed to me while away from home. Being of an independent English nature, I was humbled, yet I knew this is the way it would have to be. After engaging in several gospel series closer to home during the next eighteen months, my brethren one day approached me as to what my story was. They arranged a meeting with me and in a few days presented me with their commendation signed by six brethren, all of whom I knew, and they would know me — even from the time I was a small boy. All these dear brethren are now with the Lord.

Good Tidings from Heaven

FIVE WAYS TO FREEDOM

Some time ago, my eye was attracted to a large poster advertising a book entitled, 'Five Ways to Freedom' which was on sale in a shopping mall. Nearby was a table on which were spread several copies of the book plus photographs of the author in his soldier's uniform. On closer observation I was interested to notice that the man featured on the back cover of the book was the elderly man behind the desk. He had been a prisoner of war in a German concentration camp and after four failed attempts, managed to escape. Though he had failed four times, an irrepressible yearning for freedom impelled him to try, try and try again. The months of diligent planning were rewarded.

Dear reader, do you realise that you are not free but are in bondage to sin, perhaps not to the same extent as others, but nevertheless powerless to set yourself at liberty. Rom.6.17 describes us as the 'servants of sin'. The price demanded for your freedom is so great that no earthly wealth could pay it, nor is there anything that you can offer to loose the shackles that detain you as a prisoner. Ps.49.7,8, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (for the redemption of their soul is precious,...)". 1Pet.1.18,19, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold,... But with the precious blood of Christ..."

I am delighted to remind you that there is a foolproof way of escape from hell, not five, not two, just one. Acts 4.12, "neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved". Millions have found it to be absolutely reliable. It involves no labour or planning on your part, it has been provided at infinite cost by God Himself and is totally risk-free. If you act upon this plan there is not the remotest possibility of you being lost forever.

There is only One who has the power to set you free but to secure your freedom, He Himself had to take the place of the guilty and bear the totality of judgment against our sins. You see, the barrier to freedom is SIN — justice demands your sins to be punished but God's Son removed the barrier by bearing our punishment "in His own body on the tree", 1Pet.2.24. Such was His gracious mission to earth. Luke 4.18, "... He hath sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives,... to set at liberty them that are bruised". If He fails, we are slaves forever. Thank God, He was victorious. Heb.2.14,15, "... that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage". The proof of His success and the satisfaction His death brought to God, is His resurrection from among the dead. Seated now in heaven, He is worthy of your absolute trust and has pledged to save forever those who are prepared to trust Him. John 6.47, "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life".

Many brave men from those evil concentration camps died brutally as their plans went disastrously wrong but if you trust Christ, you are transferring the responsibility of your salvation to One who is totally incapable of failure. Through faith in Christ, "millions have reached that blissful shore" and many more are on their way to it. There is no possibility of Christ failing you when you need Him most. John 10.28, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand". John 17.12, "... those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost..."

If you do not accept this one and only means of deliverance, then forever you will be in a place whence there is no possibility of escape, Luke 16.26. "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence".

Dear reader, trust Christ today — your eternal freedom depends on it.



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Advisory Editor : A. M. S. Gooding

Editor: B. Currie

Correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to:

The Editor, 49 Glenburn Road, Dunmurry, N. Ireland, BT17 9AN.
Telephone (01232) 621343.

Secretary/Treasurer : William Neill, 109 Lurgan Road,
Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.
Telephone (018206) 24238.

Committee : Tom Armstrong, Thomas Beggs, Ronnie Johnston,
James McKeown, James Moore, Roy Reynolds.

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BEHOLD YOUR KING

(Meditations in Matthew)

by Jim Flanigan (Belfast)

17. The King is Rejected (Ch.12)

Chapter 12 is a crisis chapter in Matthew's Gospel. It is the chapter of the rejection of the King. Jesus presents Himself in a three-fold greatness, but the leaders of the nation take counsel as to how to destroy Him. He is, in the chapter, greater than their temple, greater than Jonah, and greater than Solomon. This temple, with its priesthood, was their pride, but He was greater than their temple and their priests. Jonah was unique among their prophets, having been sent with a ministry to Gentiles, but He was greater than Jonah and all their prophets. Solomon was perhaps their greatest king, but Jesus was greater than their greatest. Their priests, prophets and potentates, were all eclipsed by Him, but in a stubborn short-sightedness they would reject Him. In the heart of this chapter the Lord will speak of Gentiles trusting in His name. It was a quotation from Isaiah 42 and He was that Servant in whom the Gentiles would trust. His own nation would refuse Him. Gentiles would receive Him.

The critical (and hypocritical) Pharisees reprove Him for the action of His disciples on that Sabbath day. As they walked through the cornfield with Him they were plucking the ears of corn and eating them. Technically they were reaping and threshing! On the Sabbath! It was offensive to the legalistic ceremonialism of the Pharisees. But then, even their King David had infringed ceremonial law when he ate of the shewbread in an hour of necessity, and the Son of Man was Lord of the Sabbath.

So then, since they had such scruples about Sabbath keeping, was it lawful to heal a man on the Sabbath day? The Saviour asks, but He does not wait for their answer. What man, even amongst men, would pitilessly, mercilessly, leave some poor sheep fallen into a pit on the Sabbath, leave it there helpless until the Sabbath sun had set? Would not any man promptly lift the entrapped animal out, even on the Sabbath day? He heals the man with the withered hand and they forthwith plot His destruction. What perversity!

There follows the case of a wretched creature, blind and dumb and demon possessed. The Saviour heals him and the people are amazed. The Pharisees make the foolish observation that Jesus is in league with Beelzebub and that He casts out demons because of His association with Satan. It was an absurd commentary. Could Satan be divided against himself? How would a divided home or a divided kingdom stand. No, Jesus would bind the strong man and spoil his goods. He would deliver men from demon power and these Pharisees were actually committing the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. As the Saviour had earlier taught another man, one of themselves, a Pharisee named Nicodemus, only the Spirit of God could effect new birth in a man. If a man blasphemously rejected the Spirit

this was a rejection of the only means of salvation. There could be no forgiveness for that man. Obviously, in this particular context the unpardonable sin could only be committed in that day of miracles, but the principle must still obtain that rejection of the gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit is a rejection of the only means of salvation. It is impossible to bring to repentance one who has so despised that divine Person who alone can produce a work of grace in the heart of a man.

These Pharisees were guilty of gross wickedness and inconsistency. They had an outward show of holiness, but it was only a facade. They were a generation of vipers whose hearts were evil. How could a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit? How could hearts that treasured up evil produce anything but evil? The words that they spake would condemn them. How could the people be expected to hear or to trust such men? In the day of judgment all would be exposed, and judged accordingly.

The scribes and Pharisees then seek a sign! What evil arrogance was this! After all His miracles of grace which they had witnessed, they ask for a sign! Jesus refers them to Jonah. As it had been with Jonah, buried for three days and then raised with a ministry to Gentiles, so would it be with the Saviour. Jonah their prophet had, in a figure, come up from burial and had gone to Gentiles, and it was Gentiles too who came with the Queen of Sheba to see their King Solomon. Gentiles would hear the message and see His glory, when risen from the dead. He would be preached among all nations.

How sadly would the last state of the house of Israel be worse than the first. Jesus had come, and in His gracious ministry He had, as it were, swept and garnished the house. He was expelling the unclean spirit, but it would return. They would reject the Christ who had come to them in His Father's name, and they would one day receive an Antichrist who would come in his own name. The last state of the house would indeed be worse.

While the Saviour so conversed with them, His mother and His brethren came, wishing to speak with Him. They told Him, "Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with Thee", "My mother?" "My brethren?" "Who is my Mother?", He asks, "and who are My brethren?" Our Lord was not being disrespectful, but was showing them that natural ties and human relationships are not relevant in the kingdom. He beckons towards His disciples. "These are My mother and My brethren", He says. Those who would do the will of His Father were closer to Him than earthly relatives. There was a spiritual plane where there was something more gracious and more important and more enduring than family and earthly friends.

At this crisis moment in the Gospel and in His ministry, our Lord will now leave the house and go to the seaside. It was a symbolical gesture. The sea is ever a picture of the restlessness of Gentile nations. He will leave the house and go to such since Israel will not have Him. But this is chapter 13. —to be continued (D.V.)

ERRATUM:— In the September/October issue, page 116, the fourth line from the bottom read, "of the Godhead or was God." This ought to have read "of the Godhead or was a God."

Assembly Testimony Bible Class

by J. Riddle (Cheshunt)

ESTHER

(2) INTRODUCTION, PART B

In our previous paper, we suggested that in introducing the book of Esther, we should at least consider the following: (1) The position of the book: (2) The providence of God: (3) The purpose of the story: (4) The part of the characters. We have already given attention to the first two of these, which brings us to:

3) THE PURPOSE OF THE STORY

Isaiah 54.17 states the outstanding lesson of the book of Esther: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper". The book also recalls the words of Ps.121.4, "Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep". This reminds us that we must not forget the prophetic significance of the book. But there is a greater issue at stake than even the preservation of the Jew. Israel's coming Messiah would be "of the seed of David according to the flesh", Rom.1.3. We have therefore here a further attempt to destroy the royal line, with Haman a remarkable picture of Satan himself.

Undoubtedly, the book of Esther emphasises a general lesson, and this was very clearly stated by James Anderson many years ago in the Believers' Magazine: 'The story is an epitome of the whole human story. It displays the wrong person getting promotion to power, but although that may appear to be unjust, it doesn't hinder the end of God's ways. The man destined to the gallows will yet have the power and honour. It forms another chapter of the story of wrong being so often on the throne, but right will assuredly triumph at the last'. This brings us, finally, to:

4) THE PART OF THE CHARACTERS

In our studies, we shall pay particular attention to Haman, Esther and Mordecai. But there are significant lessons for us from Ahasuerus and Vashti. For the time being, we will quote Ellicott's Bible Commentary in which Esther is dealt with by R. Sinker: "Ahasuerus is an ordinary specimen of an Eastern despot, who knows no law save the gratification of his own passions, and of the passing caprice of the moment. He sends for his queen in defiance of decency and courtesy, to grace a revel, and deposes her for a refusal simply indicative of self respect; he is willing to order the destruction of a whole people throughout his empire, at the request of a favourite of the time; when the tide of favour turns, the favourite is not only disgraced, but he and all his family are ruthlessly destroyed, and Mordecai rises from a humble position to be the new vizier". So much for Ahasuerus! Mr. Sinker has got it pretty well summed up.

Now for a few preliminary suggestions in connection with Haman, Mordecai and Esther:

- i) **HAMAN.** We have already said that Haman is a striking picture of Satan himself. There are many resemblances, and they culminate in Esther's statement: "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman", 7.6. Doesn't this remind you of 1 Pet.5.8, Matt.13.39 and 1 Jn.3.12? The murderous intentions of Haman recall the words of the Lord Jesus concerning Satan: "he was a murderer from the beginning", Jn.8.44. Haman means, "Magnificent", and this recalls Eze.28.12-19. Haman's ambition that every knee should bow to him, takes us to Matt.4.9. However, the very means by which he endeavoured to dispose of Mordecai became the instrument of his own defeat. You can supply chapter and verse for that! We shall look at this more closely in due course.
- ii) **MORDECAI.** Here is the man who refused to bow — the only man to do so — and we are immediately reminded that a Greater than Mordecai said, "the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me", Jn.14.30. Mordecai refused to exalt himself: even after he had been paraded through the streets in high honour, he "came again to the king's gate", 6.12. But he was "the man whom the king delighteth to honour", 6.9, and the book ends with Mordecai "great in the king's house", 9.4 and "great among the Jews", 10.3. Doesn't this remind us of Luke 1.32, "He shall be great...". The man who had been condemned to death was elevated to the highest possible position. See Phil.2.9-11.
- iii) **ESTHER.** She was reminded that her privileges brought responsibility, and undertook the risks from intervention on behalf of others, 4.14-16. That's where we come in! We too have a ministry of intercession, and a mission of intervention. Like Priscilla and Aquila, there are times when we have to lay down our necks, Rom.16.4. Are we willing to expose ourselves to risk in the service of God? Work for God is never easy. But look at the end of the story. Esther is with the man honoured above all, 9.29-31. —*to be continued (D.V.)*

MEN OF GENESIS

by J. E. Todd, England

7. Jacob and his pillars

We have noted that in the book of Genesis the lives of many men of God centre around a single feature. In the case of Jacob it was the pillars that he erected.

A pillar is a monument set up to mark an important event for remembrance.

TO REMEMBER HIS CONVERSION TO GOD (Gen.28.10-22)

God had made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants, Gen.12.1-7. "I will make of thee a great nation", the nation of Israel. "Unto thy seed will I give this land", the land of Canaan. "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed", the blessing of the gospel, Gal.3.8. God passed on this covenant to Jacob as an act of pure grace, because God chose so to do. "The elder (Esau) shall serve the younger (Jacob)", Gen.25.23, Mal.1.2. Jacob's behaviour not only did not merit the covenant but rather merited judgment. He had lied and cheated to obtain the birthright and the blessing. Now his scheming had utterly failed as he fled for his life. Then God

appears and gives to him as a free gift that which he had striven for and failed to obtain. The sheer wonder of God's grace converted Jacob to God.

Jacob was filled with awe, 'He was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven', 28.17. So he set up a pillar, v18,22 to commemorate the event, the place and the time, and called the place 'Bethel', the house of God.

So we remember at the Lord's table the wonder of our conversion to God.

TO REMEMBER HIS OWN PROMISES (Gen.31.43-52)

'Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar', Gen.31.45. Laban called the pillar 'Watchpost'. Jacob's promises, marked by the pillar, were, first, to care for Laban's daughters. "If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee", v50. The second promise was never to become an enemy of Laban. "This pillar be witness ... that thou shalt not pass over ... this pillar unto me, for harm", v52.

Do you remember at the Lord's table the promises we made to the Lord at our baptism? That we had died with Christ to the old life of sin and rose with Christ to live a new life in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. 'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life', Rom.6.3-4.

TO REMEMBER GOD'S BLESSING (Gen.35.1-14)

God has blessed Jacob in preserving him since his conversion. "God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went", 35.3. God had protected Jacob from powerful enemies. 'And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob', 35.5. But above all God changed his name from Jacob - the Supplanter, to Israel - the prince with God. "Thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall by thy name", 35.10. 'Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon', 35.14.

Do we remember at the Lord's table that God has changed our name from 'sinner' to 'child of God'? 'As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God', Jn.1.12.

TO REMEMBER HIS BELOVED (Gen.35.16-20)

Jacob erected a pillar as the headstone for the grave of his beloved wife Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. 'Jacob set up a pillar upon her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day', 35.20.

We come to the Lord's table to remember our Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 'Accepted in the Beloved. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace', Eph.1.6-7.

'We love Him, because He first loved us', 1 Jn.4.19.

'Unto you therefore which believe He is precious', 1 Pet.2.7.

—to be continued (D.V.)

The Kings of Judah and Israel

by Graeme Hutchinson (Belfast)

Instruction (Paper 3)

Even before the Israelites entered the promised land, they were given detailed guidance regarding the period when they would be governed by kings. In Deut. 17.14-20 record is given with respect to what type of king should be chosen and how they should rule. Although we cannot include ourselves in such exalted circles, the passage still contains many helpful lessons for present-day believers. The teaching neatly divides itself into three sections:

(a) v14&15: Selection of the King - by God!

Guarding against any feelings of pride or possession, the divine communication would have reminded the Israelites that not only was the land given to them - ‘.. *which the Lord thy God giveth thee*’ - but the chosen king would be a divine choice - ‘*whom the Lord thy God shall choose*’. Although the New Testament focuses more on the spiritual rather than the national, the principle established in Deut. 17 can be applied generally to the assembly life. For instance as we serve within the assembly, we too must be conscious that our respective positions are not the result of *personal preference*, rather they mark a *divine decision*! 1 Cor. 12.18 - ‘But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him’. What feelings should this have sparked within the chosen king? How should we respond to the spiritual work allocated to us?

Honour

As the selection of the king was a divine prerogative, it indicated that his position was one of high honour. At this stage, to be an Israelite was a blessing in itself, but to emerge as a ruler over God’s people was even more honourable. So it is with present-day believers. The fact that we are now called the children of God (1John 3.1; 2 Cor. 6.18) is a tremendous blessing, however, to be chosen as a servant within His house - as all believers are - is to have more blessing still.

Responsibility

Obviously the coronation of the king was not designed to pamper his ego or provide lucrative business opportunities, rather it was that he might rule over God’s people in a way acceptable to God. Although the succeeding points will elaborate his responsibilities, it is important to stress that because God had selected him as king, his job was highly responsible - he knew what was expected of him and he was held accountable. The privilege of belonging to an assembly requires us to have a responsible lifestyle and attitude - 1 Tim. 3.15. Remember that we too will be held accountable - 2 Cor. 5.10.

Contentment

Following selection as king, there would have been little point in complaining or suggesting a transfer into the work of priest or prophet! We shall learn in future

studies that one king attempted such a change - Uzziah - and it ended in personal disaster (2 Chron. 26.16-19). We too must learn to be content (Phil. 4.11) within the sphere of our service, for such an attitude has 'great gain' (1 Tim 6.6).

Humility

It will not be surprising to learn that one common problem amongst many of the kings, was that they suffered from the age-old problem of pride and self-importance. They should have followed the words spoken to king David - 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God' (2 Sam. 23.3). Therefore, while our profile and popularity may increase outwardly, we must always remind ourselves of our inward condition (Rom. 7.18).

(b) v16&17: Submission of the King - to God!

Inevitably during his reign, each king would have become a figurehead for the nation. Thus, if he were to pursue a godless way of life, this would only serve to propel the nation onto a path that would divert them further from the truth. Being conscious of this, the king was unequivocally told - in verses 16 and 17 - not to do the following:

'not multiply horses' - The Carnal

Ps. 33.17 states that to trust in a horse for safety and deliverance was 'a vain thing'. Thus, for a king to increase the number of horses would signal that his trust lay in them rather than God. Perhaps this was one of the first signs of departure in Solomon - 2 Chron. 1.16, 17. Although we are unlikely to multiply horses in our life, we may show other signs that our confidence is **not** in the Lord and thus we become like the world (ie. Egypt as in the text).

'neither .. multiply wives' - The Emotional

In order that the king's heart was kept focused on the Lord, it was imperative that he did not become a husband to numerous women! The larger the number of wives, the more time the king was required to spend with them and less was reserved for God. Also if the wives were foreign, there was the real danger that they would cause the king to worship other idols. Again Solomon is the sad example - 1 Kings 11.1-4. For us the lesson is twofold. Firstly the Lord must always be our first love (Rev. 2.4). Secondly to marry someone with different spiritual values than ourselves will be disastrous. Remember we do not merely marry *a* believer, we (should) marry the *right* believer.

'neither .. multiply .. silver and gold' - The Financial

In order to protect against feelings of independence and desires for material wealth, the king was not to multiply money. Whilst scripture allows for the possibility of material wealth (1 Tim. 6.17), we are to guard against making it the 'be-all-and-end-all'. Sadly the example of Solomon can be used again - 1 Kings 10.14-15, 23 & 12.4 - as it appears he may have acquired his great wealth by oppressing his people.

(c) v18-20: Service of the King - for God!

In the remaining verses of the passage, the kings were reminded of their responsibility when on the throne. In the first instance, they were instructed on what

they had to do regarding the law. Firstly they were to **copy it** - this would have been a great aid in memorising the law. Then they were to **read it** - close inspection of what the law conveyed. Thirdly, they were to **keep it** - little point in memorising and reading if the kings failed to keep what was said. Finally they were to **do it** - a practical application of the law in the life of the king. Remember that there is little point in obtaining a firm grip of the word, if we do not let it get a firm grip of us!

Once the kings were told what they had to do, the instruction concludes in verse 20 with the obvious issue of - why? There were three main reasons for placing such emphasis on the law.

The Control of their Pride

Whilst each King was called to rule over the nation, he was not allowed to let his position engender feelings of pride. As the king read and applied the law, his fear and respect of God (v19) would have deepened and the knowledge of his own lowly position would have been magnified. Sadly we shall read of various kings whose pride increased as a result of their position. However, by focusing on the godly example of Hezekiah we can observe how pride can be controlled - 2 Chron.32.25-26.

The Clearing of their Pathway

By placing the law at the forefront of their life, each king would ensure himself of a clear pathway to follow. In this context, Josiah is a good example - the Law was prominent during his reign and not surprising we read - 'he .. declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left' (2 Chron. 34.2). This is exactly the promise of Deut. 17.20 - how faithful God is!

The Continuation of their Power

Each faithful king was promised that his reign would be prolonged along with that of his children's. This would remind the kings of their responsibility to ensure that a godly reign was pursued and a good example was set. With the case of Jehoshaphat, his unholy alliance with the wicked king Ahab, not only created problems for himself but also had sad implications for his children (2 Chron.18.1, 31; 21.1-6). From this we learn a practical lesson - doing that which is right before God ensures that our spiritual influence will never diminish and good examples will be set for others.

Thus, we have considered the instruction that each king had to ponder. In succeeding papers we can identify who failed to reach the standard and why.

(See paper 1 for details of Bibliography/Figures).

—to be continued (D.V.)

We say so much that means so little. God says so little that means so much.

J. Douglas.

* * *

The life of Christ on earth was like a river of silver flowing through a desert of soot.

H. St. John.

PAPERS ON PROPHECY

by The Late W. W. Fereday (written in 1897/98)

VOLUME 2

11(a)—The Bride, the Lamb's Wife

How refreshing it is to turn away from the dark sin of man and contemplate the magnificent grace of God! We have seen the awful evil of the false Church and the divine judgment upon her; it is now our pleasure to consider the glorious future that is in store for the true Bride of the Lamb.

God has His own wondrous purposes of grace, formed in His own great heart before time began. These He will assuredly accomplish for His own glory, in spite of all human failure and the hostility of Satan. But He allows man first to show what *he* is. Thus the past six thousand years have revealed a long story of human sin and shame, whether in the world, in Israel, or in the Church of God. When man's sad story is fully told, God will come in, setting all aside and accomplishing His own eternal counsels in rest and glory. This is due to Christ, who suffered all in this scene that God might be glorified.

In pursuing our present theme we will first turn the reader's attention to Eph.5.25-32. There we have the affection of Christ declared for the Church. The Apostle in this place is really giving practical exhortations to the saints as to their conduct in the different relationships of life. But he was so full of the great theme that he had been commissioned to everywhere unfold that even when exhorting thus he could not refrain from bringing in Christ and the Church.

The Christian wife is bidden to consider the Church's position in relation to Christ and to render due obedience to her husband. The Christian husband, on the other hand, is directed to keep before him Christ's affection for the Church as his pattern of behaviour to his wife. The Spirit of God would lead us into God's thoughts and show us heavenly patterns, that they may have their due effect in our daily walk on earth. May the spirit of heaven enter into our various earthly relationships more and more!

Let the reader weigh well before the Lord the precious statement in verse 25: "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it". This is fuller and deeper than the statement in Matt.13.46: "Went and sold all that He had and bought it". It was one thing to surrender all His earthly rights as Son of David and Son of man, but quite another to lay down His own life. "Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her", Gen.29.20. But Christ did more than serve. He suffered and bled that the Church might be His own possession for ever. Was ever love like this? But it could not be otherwise. Sin stood in the way. Divine grace must have a righteous foundation, so He accepted the cross with all its unutterable agony and shame, that every righteous claim of the Throne of God might be met. For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross and despised the shame, Heb.12.2. Now all barriers are removed, and His grace and love flow out richly and blessedly to all who believe in His name.

Let it be distinctly understood what Scripture means by “the Church” which Christ so loved. Many are vague as to this, having a general idea that the term includes all the saved from the beginning to the end of time. We sometimes meet with the phrase, “The Church in Jewish times”, etc. But we are firmly persuaded that this is a great mistake. We find no mention of the Church in the Old Testament at all. There we find God dealing with an elect nation, blessing them after an earthly manner in the Land of Canaan. The godly in the midst of that nation and elsewhere appear as so many units looking up to God in their own individual faith, but a scheme for forming them into a corporate body nowhere appears. When the Lord Jesus was here in the flesh, He spoke of the Church as a future to be built upon Himself, the Son of the living God, Matt.16.18. Clearly He did not regard it as then existing in any shape whatever. The birthday of the Church of God was the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended from heaven according to the promise of the Lord Jesus, Acts 2.

Even then the full character of the new company was not revealed. It is questionable whether any of the first Christians knew at the beginning into what a wonderful sphere of heavenly blessing they had been introduced. The unfolding of this was reserved for Paul — one born out of due time. To him, by special revelation, was made known God's eternal counsel concerning Christ and the Church. Hitherto it had been an unrevealed secret — “hid in God”, Eph.3. Then it came out that God was forming believing Jews and Gentiles into “one new man” — to be the body of Christ the Head, and, as we shall see shortly, to be His Bride in the day of glory.

Into this those who lived and died prior to the Pentecostal outpouring do not come. Those who follow us in testimony on the earth are again a distinct company of saints, with a portion peculiar to themselves. It is no question of merit or superior godliness, but of God's own sovereign intentions. If He has chosen to keep the best wine until now, none do well to complain: and if He has seen fit to provide some better thing for us than for other companies of saints, who dare find fault? If the Church's portion, like Benjamin's mess, is really five times as much as that of others, let us see to it that we enjoy it, and not endeavour to explain it away, Gen.43.34. The Old Testament worthies will certainly find their place in heaven for ever, Heb.11.16, but will not stand in the same relation to Christ as the believers of the present dispensation, though their blessing, of course, as ours, is founded on His blood. Through His grace, all who are saved now are called into a special place of honour — a peculiar character of blessedness.

Christ displayed His love in the past, then, by giving Himself up for the Church. His affection is proved in the present by His constant and unwearying care. We read “that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word”, Eph.5.26. He applies His own gracious Word to her who is to be His companion in bliss for ever that her thoughts and desires may be formed suitably to Himself, and that she may be weaned from every attraction that Satan and the world present. He brings Himself and His glory constantly before her heart and thus she is not only cheered and helped in the desert path, but she is able to put from her everything inconsistent with the One to whom she is going. This is the aim and object of all His present care and attention. He would have His beloved Church heavenly practically

while waiting to see His face.

Such is His love and grace; but what shall we say as to the response of our hearts to it? “So much to be loved, and so little to love”. We have not been all we should have been for Christ. The Church has not kept herself as a chaste virgin for Christ, but has trifled with many lovers, to her hurt and loss. Nothing is so painful as unrequited love. How solemn to read “I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love”, Rev.2.4. Let us confess our failure. Let us frankly own that we have not appreciated and responded to the heart of Christ as we should. In the days that yet remain, ere all is closed in glory, let us cultivate earnest affection for Him. This can only be as we keep near to Him and learn the deep secrets of His wondrous love to us.

—to be continued (D.V.)

Characteristics of Declension (Judges Chap. 5) and Some Suggested Remedies (Eph. Chap. 6)

by D. S. Parrack, Somerset, England

PART 2

The third characteristic of the time, revealed that the Israelites had completely failed to appreciate the real cause of their enslavement. “They chose new gods, then was war in the gates”, v8. In Joshua's final discourse before his death, he had made quite clear to the people the solemnity of the undertaking they had entered into when they declared, “Therefore will we also serve the Lord for He is our God”, Josh.24.18. He went so far indeed as to appear to be almost dissuading them from making such a commitment, including the solemn warning, “If ye forsake the Lord and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt and consume you”, Josh.24.20. This was in fact the exact situation into which they had now come, and not for the first time. The precise cause of their present servitude was that “The children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord when Ehud was dead. And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan”, Judges 4.1,2. Now the remedy for such a state of affairs was repentance and a turning to God for mercy and forgiveness. This they had done in the past, time and time again, from the very beginning of their wilderness wanderings right up to their previous subjugation under Eglon the Moabite (see Judges 3.12-30). But for twenty years they suffered under Jabin and Sisera, changing and experimenting with any and every new god that appeared to offer any hope of release from the tyranny of their oppressors. The result of such degrading self-abasement by those who had experienced the goodness of past forgiveness was that the enemy was triumphing in their very gates. The place which was known as a venue for the deliberations of their elders, where reconciliations

could be made, where ordered justice could be administered, was now dominated by the enemy. Their new gods, in whatever permutation they might try them, proved utterly valueless and indeed served only to prolong the agonies under which they were suffering.

Now we should not be too highminded in our condemnation of the Israelites. The apostle warns us, in the very context of speaking of their failures, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall", 1 Cor.10.12. James reminds us that, "In many things we offend all", Jas.3.2, and we are assured, even the very best of us, that, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed", Lam.3.22. We need to benefit from the experiences through which they passed by avoiding the pitfalls into which they fell and by adhering to the safe pathways which they missed. If we are concerned and exercised by a lack of blessing, are we prepared to go even beyond self examination and say meaningfully, "Search me O God and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting", Ps.139.23,24. Such an approach will never fail to bring out the Lord's grace and love in abundant forgiveness and renewal. It will however also necessitate a willingness to deal with those things which He shows us to be stumbling blocks and hindrances to blessing. A failure to respond to the revealed mind of God in such circumstances will inevitably lead to disciplinary judgment. The Corinthians found this out to their cost. There was physical weakness and death in the church and it was widespread too. "Many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep". This was a result not only of sin but of a failure to judge sin when it was shown to be such. "For", Paul continues, "If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged", 1 Cor.11.30,31.

How many examples we have of those who by acknowledging and confessing their own association with the sins of God's people, have been instrumental in leading a recovery from seemingly hopeless positions. Daniel was prepared to say, "We have sinned and done wickedly — neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God", Dan.9.5,10. The response from God was immediate, "Fear not Daniel; for from the first day thou didst set thine heart to understand and to chasten thyself before God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words", Dan.10.12. Ezra, confronted with the sin of the newly restored Jews, though he had taken no actual part in the breakdown that had occurred, cries, "O 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", Ezra 9.6. The result of his public confession was a consciousness among the whole people of the seriousness of their sin, followed by an evidenced willingness to put things right. "For the people wept very sore — and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter and for the great rain", Ezra 10.1,9. Those who had committed the sin of inter-marriage, "gave their hands that they would put away their wives and, being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass", Ezra 10.19.

Don't let us attempt to blame any spiritual dearth which we may be experiencing upon God and look for something or someone else to provide a new source of inspiration or motivating force. For, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" but, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to

forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness", 1 Jn.1.8,9. Being so cleansed and walking in the practical enjoyment of it, we shall be free from the bondage which sin brings and experience the reality of the Lord's assurance, "If the Son therefore shall make you free ye shall be free indeed", Jn.8.36.

The final degradation of Israel, in common with all subjugated races suffering foreign occupation, was that she had been almost totally disarmed. "Was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?" v8. The Philistines imposed a similar embargo in later times, even to the extent of forbidding a smith to ply his trade. "All the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his share and his coulter and his axe and his mattock", 1 Sam.13.20.

Such a situation switches us neatly across to the second passage under consideration, Ephesians chapter 6.
—to be continued (D.V.)

Some Truths Concerning The Holy Spirit

by H. W. Graham (Eiré)

THE COMING

On the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the resurrection of Christ, and ten after His ascension, the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity came into the world. The second Person, the Son of God, had previously come, had remained some thirty-three years and had returned to heaven. On His return the Spirit came down and still remains, Jn.7.39; 16.7.

When the Son of God was on earth it would have been ridiculous for believers to pray to the Father to send Him down, even so now it is ridiculous to pray for the sending down of the Holy Spirit, seeing that his coming is an accomplished historical fact. There are quite a number of parallels in Luke 2 and Acts 2, between the coming of the Son and the coming of the Spirit, but it is not proposed to trace them in this article. The reader can search them out for himself. For our present purpose it must suffice to emphasise that for over nineteen hundred years the Holy Spirit has been in the world as really as Christ was in it for thirty three years. There is no such thing as a second Pentecost, just as there can be no repetition of the birth of Christ.

THE RECEIVING

Christ came into the world and some received Him personally and most did not, Jn.1.11,12. Likewise the Spirit is in the world: some receive Him and many do not. How is He received? Listen to Peter at Pentecost: ... "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost", Acts 2.38. From this passage we learn that the Spirit is received in the same way and at the same time as the forgiveness of sins. This was for Jews; but Gentiles heard the word, received it, repented, believed and received the gift of the Spirit, Acts 10.44; 11.1,17,18; 15.7-9. Gal.3.2,14 confirms that it is by

faith in Christ. Believing sinners at the moment of conversion receive the Holy Spirit and He indwells them from that time, Rom.8.9. The reception of the Spirit is an essential part of salvation just as the new birth, justification, etc.

THE SEAL, THE EARNEST, THE FIRST FRUITS

Concerning the Spirit's work in the believer the above three terms are used as well as others. We bring these three together because they are similar although not exactly the same thing. Please read the following passages: 2 Cor.1.22; 5.5; Eph.1.13,14; 4.30; Rom.8.11,23. You will find that all point forward to the redemption of the body of the believer. The Holy Spirit is the seal of divine ownership, the guarantee of God's taking possession of that which is purchased and owned. For the believer it is the present sample of a future inheritance. God will certainly fulfil in all the redeemed that which He purposed in saving them — that to all eternity they should be conformed to the image of His Son, Rom.8.29.

THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT

Every believing sinner is, from the moment of conversion, a member of the Church which is the body of Christ. "By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles", 1 Cor.12.13. As every believer is a member of that body, and since he is so by the baptism of the Spirit, it clearly follows that every believer has been baptised with the Holy Spirit. There is no such thing as a believer praying for the baptism of the Spirit. It is not post-conversion experience; it is not something to be sought for, it is a blessed fact as real as the forgiveness of sins.

THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

The disciples were baptised with the Holy Spirit on His coming at the day of Pentecost, and they were filled at the same time, Acts 1.5; 2.4. It is normal for a new convert to be filled with the Spirit at and from his conversion. The Spirit enters, fills and floods his whole being. Not every believer continues filled with the Spirit, hence the exhortation: "Be filled with the Spirit", Eph.5.18. The tense of the verb means: "be filled, and continue being filled". It indicates a continuous refilling. Perhaps an illustration may make the matter clearer. A cup of hot water is drawn from the tap and at once a cup of cold water runs into the tank to fill it. Draw a bucketful and the tank is refilled by the inflow of a bucketful. We use up spiritual energy in living, witnessing and working for Christ, and we need to be continually replenished. We are in danger of neglecting the refilling, which is not automatic, and so the exhortation: "Be filled". How is it done? Read the two parallel passages: Eph.5.18-6.9; Col.3.16-4.1. You will notice the various items of correspondence between them. To the exhortation to be filled with the Spirit corresponds: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Through the reading and meditation on the Scriptures we are kept filled. The exhortation to be filled comes in the midst of a series of very practical exhortations. Among them are three pairs together: "Not as fools but as wise ... not unwise, but understanding ... not drunk with wine but filled with the Spirit". The result is a happy spiritual condition and a consistent Christian walk in the domestic and social life. Being filled with the Spirit does not do away with the need for practical exhortations, for such follow. Returning to our illustration if the water tank runs empty there will be a big splash when finally it is being refilled. If the heart gets cold and departs from the Lord there will be a big upsurge of joy on

restoration but this is not normal. There should be a continual refilling and a steady maintenance of Joy. To be filled with the Spirit is to walk in daily practical obedience to God and to His word.

SINS AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

The New Testament makes mention of three sins against the Holy Spirit of which the believer may be guilty. He may **lie** to the Holy Spirit by hypocrisy, by pretending to a higher degree of devotion to Christ than that which is the reality, or by boasting of a spiritual experience of which he knows nothing, Acts 5.3. He may **grieve** Him by indulging in any of the sins mentioned in the preceding verses, Eph.4.30. He may **quench** Him by refusing to heed His voice when it comes by the reading or preaching of the Scriptures, 1 Thes.5.19-21. Let us beware of these sins for they will bring sad consequences into the life of any Christian who commits them.

There abounds much unsound teaching concerning the Holy Spirit and His work, many unscriptural terms are used, and so there is much need to give heed to the truths we have touched upon, as well as many others on the same subject. So, get to your Bible.

HE SHALL BE CALLED

by John B. D. Page (Weston-Super-Mare)

Down through the centuries in Bible times, the custom was for parents to name their children *at* birth. But seven times the Lord intervened and named a child *before* his birth. The first was during the patriarchal period. The last was for His own Son, the Babe of Bethlehem. Before He was born, according to the Gospel records, God gave Him four names, of which three were made known by an angel and the fourth fulfilled a prophetic scripture.

These names are “The Son of God,” “Emmanuel,” “Jesus,” and “The Son of the Most High.” They are not in the order as recorded in the Scriptures. But, in this order, they reveal various truths concerning His person, ranging from the eternal past to the millennial future. Let us now consider each name in turn.

“**The Son of God**,” said the angel Gabriel to Mary, He shall be called, Lk.1.35, signifying ‘what He had always *been*.’ The name denotes His absolute Godhead. This means that His Deity is neither shared with nor derived from His Father. In Deity He is equal with His Father as He said that “God was His Father, making Himself equal with God,” Jn.5.18. By this claim of equality with God, He meant that both His Father and He were totally God. When He said later, “My Father is greater than I,” Jn.14.28, He is not contradicting His earlier statement of being equal with God, but He indicates that whilst He was on earth His Father in heaven was greater in position. In stating that “I and My Father are One, Jn.10.30, He is not saying that He and His Father are on Person but rather of one Substance as Deity.

He did not become God in Eternity past or within the span of Time, but He was, is and ever will be God, and so He is eternal as Deity. Introduced as “the Word,” these vital truths are set forth in Jn.1.1. “In the beginning (that is, at the first moment

of time) was the Word (indicating He already existed), and the Word was with God (implying His eternal relationship in the Godhead) and the Word was God" (meaning He is truly and essential Deity). Again by saying, "Before Abraham was, I am," Jn.8.58, He claimed not only eternal precedence over Abraham, the founding-father of the Jewish nation, but He identified Himself as "I am," the ineffable name by which God revealed Himself to Moses. Hence, He implied: before Time - "I am," when Time ends - "I am," signifying that He knows no past or future and so His Deity is eternal.

Concerning His Divine Sonship within the Triune Godhead, the name "the Son of God" does not infer either subordination or inferiority to the Father. But rather the word "Son" denotes the dignity of His person in His Deity.

"Emmanuel..." this name denotes 'what He *became*.' Unlike the others, it was not given by the angel but, according to Matt.1.21f, it was in fulfilment of the prophecy in Is.7.14 that the son born of the virgin should be called "Emmanuel," meaning "God with us," - a stupendous thought! In the distant past God had appeared in human form to the patriarchs and later to others, but none of these theophanies was the realisation of "God with us" - on no occasion did God become man but only appeared as man.

The Incarnation is defined in Jn.1.14(RV): "And the Word became flesh . . ." He who is Eternal became temporal. The Celestial One became terrestrial. Thus, a union of the Infinite and the finite was formed. Not surprisingly, Paul declared that "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh . . .", 1Tim.3.16, which refers to the birth of Christ and His life on earth in the days of His flesh. In becoming Man, the Incarnate had two natures, one divine and the other human, but He had one personality, not two.

The timing of the Incarnation was divinely predetermined, for "when the fullness of time was come" - not a moment too early or too late - "God sent forth His Son" - His dear Son - "born of a woman," Gal.4.4(RV), which denotes the *universality* of His Humanity; ". . . He took on the seed of Abraham," Heb.2.16, indicating the *nationality* of His Humanity; and ". . . (He) was born of the seed of David," Rom.1.3(RV), which signifies the *royalty* of His Humanity.

"Jesus" was to be His name said the angel to Mary, Lk.1.31, and similarly to Joseph in a dream during their betrothal, Matt.1.18-21. This name indicates 'what He will *do*' - ". . . He shall save His people from their sins."

For His work of salvation, it was essential that the form of His incarnation should not impair His Deity or prejudice His purity. This high objective was achieved not by man but by God. As foretold in Is.7.14(RV) (mgn), ". . . Behold the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son . . ." Some seven centuries later concerning the virgin Mary to whom Joseph was betrothed, an angel told him in a dream: ". . . that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost, Matt.1.20. As His conception was of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was free from the taint of original sin - ". . . in Him is no sin," according to 1Jn.3.5.

Both the supernatural conception (the birth was natural) and absolute sinlessness of Jesus had far reaching effects in accomplishing His work of salvation for sinful men. It meant His blood, which He shed in His death on the cross, was untainted by sin. Consequently, it is efficacious for the remission of sins during this church age

of grace and in the millennial age of righteousness to come.

“The Son of the Most High”: this is the last name made known to Mary for her Son, Lk.1.32f(RV). It reveals ‘What He will *be*’. “He shall be great . . .”, said the angel. In the age to come, the glorified Messiah will be “a great King over all the earth,” Ps.47.2. Jerusalem will be “the city of the great King,” Ps.48.2. As Deity, He is “a great God” whilst in His regal supremacy He is “a great King above all gods” of the heathen, Ps.95.3. Still Deity, Messiah will be the matchless Monarch in the millennial world.

The name “the Son of the Most High” is appropriate for His future reign on earth. This is apparent from the first mention of the divine name “the Most High” in Gen.14.19 where He said, as such, to be “possessor of heaven and earth.” The name denotes His absolute dominion over the earth. This has not yet been realised but it will be when Jesus, the Son of the Most High, rules over all the earth in the age to come. Of His future Kingship, the angel gave Mary three features. First, “the Lord God shall give upon Him the throne of His father David,” which means the Davidic dynasty, after an interruption of long centuries, will be restored. Second, “He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever,” that is to say, His millennial reign will be over a united nation not divided as it was after Solomon until the Exile. Third, “and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” In the past, kingdoms have risen and fallen, but the Messianic kingdom will neither fall nor end.

Truly, “the Son of the Most High” will be the King of Israel and over all the earth.

THE LORD'S DAY — IT'S SANCTITY

by D. C. Hinton (England)

INTRODUCTION

In the midst of a Godless age and a society which is prominently marked by those who are “lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God”, 2 Tim.3.4, it is good to remind ourselves of how we should behave on the Lord's day, the first day of the week. There is, of course, no specific Scripture to which we can turn for definite guidance. This is unlike the law concerning the Sabbath. Yet there are indications in the Word of God as to how it should be viewed, and so guide our behaviour.

DEFINITION

The ‘Lord's day’ is not another term for the Sabbath, just as the ‘Lord's Supper’ is not another name for the Passover. Both the Sabbath and the Passover were given under the law to Israel alone. The Day and the Supper appertain to this dispensation alone and are of a higher, spiritual character. Our behaviour on these occasions is not laid down by detailed commandments but reflects our spiritual affections, and reveals our spiritual intelligence and discernment.

The term the 'Lord's day' is found just once in the New Testament and that is Rev.1.10, while the words, "the Lord's" occur in one other place, namely 1 Cor.11.20, referring to the Lord's Supper. "The Lord's" does not indicate something which the Lord possesses as if it meant, 'the day of the Lord' or 'the supper of the Lord'. This is proved by the fact that 'the day of the Lord' is an OT expression referring to the coming day of judgment on the earth which will occur after all believers have been called away at the rapture of the church. John is writing of a day when the Lord is still moving among the assemblies of His people, so it cannot refer to the 'day of the Lord'.

The word "Lord" is an adjective indicating a day and a supper that should bear the character of the Lord, markedly different from all other days and suppers. All connected with it should bear the stamp of His character and be under His control and be 'Lordly' in every way. It appears that the Lord's day' was the first day of the week, the resurrection day. This was the day marked out by the Saviour when He appeared to His disciples upon His resurrection, Jn.20. The fact that He did not appear on the Sabbath emphasises the importance of the first day. This was the day when the Father manifested His complete satisfaction in the death of His Son by raising Him from the dead. That event on that day proved the basis of our salvation and eternal blessing had been secured. The key event of that day is the keeping of the Lord's Supper. This is a time when His people are to be occupied with Him alone. When all is to be for Him, not for us. All is to be in keeping with His character and on obedience to His word. Properly understood and appreciated, this gathering will give character to the rest of the day and as a consequence will affect our lives during the following week.

IMPLICATIONS

Therefore it is important, even imperative, that we are present every week at the Lord's Supper unless it is impossible for us to attend. We claim that He is present, the One whom we say is our Lord, and it is something of a contradiction to absent ourselves willingly. Such lax behaviour must grieve Him. It makes it important also that when on holiday we go to places where we can join with like minded believers to celebrate the Supper in a Scriptural way.

As we have pointed out, this was the day marked out by the Saviour when He appeared to His own following His resurrection, Jn.20. Why did He choose the first day of the week? Surely this indicates that it was thereafter to be regarded as a special day, the resurrection day bringing in a completely new order.

We well know that Paul considered it in this light, feeling obliged to stay at Troas so that he might not be at sea on the Lord's day and thus miss the Lord's Supper, Acts 20. The supper is an assembly function not to be celebrated by individual believers alone at home or on holiday.

In the UK, before 1939, the Lord's day was generally recognised as being different from other days. The years of the second world war inevitably brought a change as so many people became used to treating every day alike. This could probably be traced to the necessary increase in shift work. Shift work imperceptibly implants in the mind that all seven days are just the same. This has been accentuated in our day

by the general opening of shops on the Lord's day which increases the idea that there is no difference between the seven days. Believers must take great care not to be influenced by these changes in society. In fact they give us greater opportunity to show that we are different because we are under the Lordship of a risen Christ.

We each, when we break the loaf at the Lord's Supper, identify ourselves with the Lord, since it is 'the communion of the body of Christ'. To do this and then to treat the rest of the day as having nothing to do with Him is to behave like the unsaved who attend a place of worship in the morning and then go shopping or to enjoy themselves during the remainder of the day. The world will not take our profession of salvation seriously if we act in this way. It gives the impression that our portion in Christ needs to be supplemented to bring satisfaction.

When we consider how we should behave on the Lord's day the cardinal question is, 'what would the Lord do on that day if He was here?' Would He celebrate the Lord's Supper and then go sightseeing or shopping? Would He go swimming or watch sport? Such ideas are blasphemous. Would He travel on the Lord's day for pleasure or to go on holiday? Scripture leaves us in no doubt that we are to take the Saviour's place in His absence and manifest His character. In every situation the answer to 'what shall we do' is 'what would He have done?' Would this not suggest that the time should be spent in serving Him in some way or in the study of His word?

Each time we relax our treatment of the Lord's day as a sanctified day we set a bad example to our family and other onlookers. As with all departures from the will of God, succeeding generations will take the departure a step further. By setting a bad example we will stumble others and we know how seriously this is viewed by the Lord. Lk.17.2

Have we ever thought that our attitude to the Lord's day will be one of the aspects of our life that will be reviewed at the judgment seat of Christ? Will we have to hang our heads in shame and lose reward because we have not kept the day for Him? Keeping the Lord's day in a reverential way as He desires may cost us something. Surely this is as nothing in comparison to the price paid by the Saviour for our salvation.

"The way we spend the Lord's day may well be the straw which shows how the wind blows. The man who deliberately flouts the Lord's day, flouts the Lordship of Christ and shows the direction in which his whole life is tending". (W. Hoste).

I always like to have a censor for God, a basin of water for my brethren and coals of fire for my enemies.

W. W. Fereday.

* * *

What is modern method? It is the public admission that we think that God's ways have failed.

J. Moffatt.

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (55)

by A. Dryburgh (Canada)

I had the great privilege of being born in a land called 'Bible loving' Scotland, in a Christian home. Thus I was privileged above many. My parents not only preached Christ to us but lived Christ before us. Twice in the week we attended meetings and four times on the Lord's Day we found ourselves among the people of God. Scripture is very clear, the greater the privilege — the greater the responsibility and the greater will be the judgment. How deep, dark and destructive will the punishment be of those who die in their sins, who have been raised in a Christian home. God spoke to me time and again, but like so many, I stirred for a short time but continued to live in sin.

When I was 13 years of age, special gospel meetings were held in Bethany Hall, Lochore. A brother called Patterson, who served the Lord in Bermuda, was preaching. One truth that seemed to be preached much in those days was the coming of the Lord and in those meetings this truth was being stressed. I knew if the Lord had to come, loved ones would be taken and I would be left for the wrath and judgment of God.

The meetings had continued for a few weeks and the Spirit of God had been striving with me. Sleep left me, my appetite had gone, and the truth of the coming of the Lord really bothered me.

On 7th January, after the Gospel had been faithfully preached, I waited behind to speak to the preacher. He read a few Scriptures to me that night, one of the verses was Isa.53.5. I saw that night when Christ suffered on the cross it was for me. Then I could sing with the hymn writer:

Was it for me He bowed His head,
Upon the cross and freely shed
His precious blood — the crimson tide?
Was it for me the Saviour died?

It was for me, yes, all for me;
Oh, love of God so great, so free;
Oh, wondrous love, I'll shout and sing,
He died for me, my Lord and King.

I remember walking home that night rejoicing in the truth of sins forgiven. When I got home, as usual there were people visiting. I remember telling them I had gotten saved. My father asked me to come upstairs and he asked me how I got saved. When he came down stairs again he said to the others, "I think he has got it". After nearly 50 years in Christ I can say as we sometimes sing:

He'll do better for you than this world can do,
He's a mighty Saviour, He is good and true,
He will save you by His grace,
Until you see His face,
He'll do better for you than this world can do.

I worked in a coal mine which had its advantages. One was when you finished your work you never thought about it again until you returned the next day. The mine where I worked went on fire and I remember, in the quietness of my own room, seeking the mind of God for my life. One Friday night I remember reading my Bible and three Scriptures seemed to stand out. Gen.28.15(RV), "I am with thee and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest and bring thee again into this land" — God's promise to Jacob. Then Joshua 1.7(RV), "that thou mayest have good success whithersoever thou goest" — God's promise to Joshua. Also II Sam.8.6(RV), "The Lord gave victory to David whithersoever he went" — God's promise to David. We were always taught that every promise in the Bible is not to us but every promise in the Bible is for us. And with these three promises I left Scotland for Canada in 1965, arriving in London, Ontario, where I took up employment. Our time there with the saints who met in the Pall Mall Hall was very enjoyable.

During this time I met with George Campbell who invited me to visit Labrador. In May 1967 I left London for Labrador and spent the summer on the Gospel boat preaching in different villages on the coast of Labrador, Quebec and Newfoundland. Afterwards I returned to Scotland in September 1967. Looking back we can see God's faithfulness to His promise. In 1968, Irene and I were married (she comes from London, Ontario). We lived in Scotland for seven years but during that time we always had a desire to return to Labrador.

In the month of June 1975 we made inquiries at the immigration office in Glasgow, Scotland about immigrating to Labrador, Canada. They told us two things were essential: (1) We must have someone to sponsor us, and (2) I had to have a job to go out to. After one month we received a letter from the immigration office saying we had been accepted for Canada and my wife Irene, who is Canadian, was my sponsor, and no mention of a job.

We felt before the Lord that the door had been opened for us to move to Labrador. A verse of Scripture we did take comfort and encouragement from and it has been an encouragement to us down through the years, is Ps.45.10, "Forget also thine own people and thy father's house, so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty, for He is thy Lord and worship thou Him".

When we left Scotland we did not know what was before us, if secular work was before us we were prepared for that. We were in Labrador for three years preaching the gospel and ministering the Word of God in the assemblies in Newfoundland, and Labrador. In 1978 we received a letter from the brethren in London, Ontario, commending us to the work of the Lord, also along with the assembly in English Point, Labrador. We have spent 13 years on the coast of Labrador and as we look back we have much cause to thank God for His faithfulness and kindness towards us. Not one thing has failed of all that He has promised. We look back and can say, "How good is the God we adore, our faithful unchangeable friend".

We have visited many parts of Canada and some in the U.S.A. and have enjoyed the fellowship of God's dear people.

We would value the continued prayers of the saints that we may be led in a path that will glorify our God in His people being built up and sinners being reached and saved.

Good Tidings from Heaven

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR YOU

Politicians and humanists promise a brighter future, insurance companies and financial institutions encourage you to plan for the future, clairvoyants and fortune-tellers claim to be able to foretell the future. Do you ever wonder what the future holds for you? Some people in their quest for this knowledge, consider it innocuous to read their horoscopes, unaware that only God knows what shall be. Satan himself knows no more of the future than is revealed in the Word of God. Others dabble to a deeper and more dangerous degree in the occult, very often with disastrous results.

Dear reader, I would like to focus your thoughts just now on the great eternal future, towards which all humanity is inexorably drifting as fast as time can carry them. You may have planned thoughtfully for your retirement and made contingency plans for the unexpected in life but have you made preparation for eternity, that endless, inexhaustible future which for all of us is inescapable? Life will pass with unbelievable speed and will surely end but the Scriptures pronounce very specifically on the eternal existence of the soul. Hebrews 9.27, "...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment". In Luke 16.22,23 there are significant occurrences of the little conjunction 'and' to indicate that death is not the end. "...the beggar died, **and** was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; **And** in hell he lift up his eyes...". Similarly in Job 14.10 we read, "But man dieth, and wasteth away: Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" Notice the present tense, "Where is he?" indicating the continuing existence of the soul.

Raise the telescope beyond the horizon of life and ponder this great question, "Where will I be in eternity?" The Bible speaks of two destinies for all mankind, irrespective of creed, class, character, clime or culture. Whether rich or poor, famous or unknown, pious or pagan, all will either be in HEAVEN or HELL. What determines which of the two it will be, is my attitude to the Lord Jesus and His death on Calvary — not my religious or political affiliations, not my philosophies or practices, not my efforts or piety. Without the experience of the new birth, salvation, through faith in Christ alone, we remain on the way which we commenced at birth, leading ever nearer to "everlasting punishment", Matt.25.46, "...this place of torment", Luke 16.28, "...the lake of fire", Rev.20.15.

We are absolutely powerless to effect any change by our own efforts, we are, according to Rom.5.6, "without strength". However, God, in amazing love and grace, provided a way of escape from the everlasting burnings. Rom.5.8, "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"; 1 John 3.4 "...God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him". To make salvation available, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed", Is.53.5.

We committed the sins, we deserved the punishment but He bore it for us, not some of it, not most of it but Christ Himself assured us that He bore it all, for his penultimate cry from the Cross was, "It is finished": John 19.30. The fearful penalty has been borne, the ransom price has been paid in full, and everything needed to save souls from hell, has been fully done.

Dear reader, would you be prepared to believe Christ's words and depend alone upon Him to save you from hell and take you to heaven? Because of that glorious achievement by the Son of God, that dark day almost two millennia ago, the future for you will be bright and unclouded if you trust Him but please consider the alternative — a bleak future will be yours if life passes without you ever having put your faith in the only One who can save your undying, immortal soul.