

Treasures of Truth

Selected Articles

Volume I

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Introduction to Treasures of Truth

The following announcement appeared in:

Instalment One

June 1971

Published by

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EDITORIAL POLICY

Though present writers in this publication are in fundamental accord wherever the intention of Scripture is readily discerned, they recognize also that occasions could arise for valid difference of opinion on less definitive subjects

This could further pertain to other writers whose articles of merit may be approved for publication in future issues, even where the author's views may not in every particular coincide with ours.

Every article published is submitted only for the reader's private and prayerful consideration. Nothing is tendered with any assumption of finality; rather only as a means to a reverent search for truth; a search wherein the reader is invited to share.

EDITORIAL

SO MANY readers of "The Differentiator" have written in response to our invitation and have asked for some kind of continuation for the service previously rendered by that Magazine, so we have decided to send a copy of this first instalment of "Treasures of Truth" to everyone on the current subscription list.

Mrs. Davies has gone to considerable trouble in providing us with an up-to-date record of names and addresses. For this we are most grateful, and we should be happy to add further names, should you know of others to whom a periodical such as this might be welcome and helpful.

We have not found sufficient time personally to acknowledge every letter we have received, so we shall be glad if those who have received no reply will accept this general word of thanks. Especially do we appreciate the warm tributes that have been paid to the outstanding work of our friends Alexander Thomson and R. B. Withers, who between them gave much added solid ground to the rock of truth whereon we stand.

We should also like to make public acknowledgement of the generosity of several friends who with their letters have also sent offerings for the future support of this new work. These are warmly appreciated, as are also the promises of support we have received. We therefore feel encouraged to proceed without naming any fixed rate of subscription. Readers may share in the cost as each may choose but for any who may be unable to share, no such participation is required. All we ask (if you have not already done so) is that you please inform us if you wish to remain on the Mailing List.

Several readers have kindly sent subscriptions to "The Differentiator" but under the circumstances of much uncertainty then, Mrs. Davies felt best to return their remittances, especially since we have been able to settle any remaining accounts of the "The Differentiator" completely free of debt. Also as Mrs. Davies writes, it is evident "we have a very rich Lord." Since she is quite willing now as always to be helpful, those readers who have formerly sent their publishing donations to her may now also, if they choose, send any future offerings either to Mrs. Davies or to the Editors. In either case such offerings will be applied to future publishing expense.

"TREASURES OF TRUTH" will not be published at fixed intervals, but as and when material is available which we feel will be of our profit to our readers. It is not just "another religious magazine", of which there already are too many, although unfortunately only few of them deal with truth. So far as we are concerned, our statement of intent should be clear to all.

Obviously, since the Editors have enjoyed close relationships with A.T. and R.B.W. and their associates over many years it will be apparent that our understanding of Scripture is closely identified with the expositions put forward from time to time by those two gifted scholars. But this does not exclude papers based on the researches of other expositors who during the present century have done so much to clear away the tangle of theological over-growth which previously greatly obscured the teachings of Scripture. In short, we follow no leader, and are not partisans for any school of thought, except that "which the Holy Spirit teacheth".

The miracle of God's truth is that always, somewhere, He has kept the light of it burning. This in varying degrees and in different ways "parting to each" of His witnesses some personal understanding or enlightenment to share with fellow-believers. Sometimes the light shines from unexpected quarters, and we hope to publish extracts from time to time from the works of those who have been given the insight to express truth in poetry. Poetry is far more than writing lines that rhyme; it demands elevation of thought, and has been defined as the "best words in the best order". Paul says that we are God's poems!

If this small service which we are attempting is to accomplish anything worthwhile for God's glory it will need what every human effort for God has always needed, "pleadings and intercessions". It is only God Who "giveth the increase", so we can confidently request that you too will make these things your share of the work.

THE EDITORS

THE TRUTH AND THE LIE

The magnificent, moving and profound account of our Lord's life provided by the Apostle John provides us all with an understanding of important truths of which we stand in very great need; even greater than is commonly realized, for many are deeply involved with other pursuits of no spiritual value, trying either to misapply Hebrew prophecy to a present premature time or they become so preoccupied with dispensational extremes as to limit their study of Scripture almost entirely to Paul's prison epistles at the neglect of the Word as a whole.

It is almost impossible for us to understand the truths revealed especially for ourselves by the Apostle Paul apart from the general truths recorded by the Apostle John, for in his Gospel, in particular, we find set out some of the most wonderful unfoldings the Lord Jesus ever taught. And yet some expositors seem to treat these fairly lightly, as if in some way they were inferior; yet they are in no way inferior even to the surpassing revelations given to Paul. There is a Scripture in Matthew's account (Chap. 10:24,25) which reads like this: —

"A disciple is not over his teacher, neither a slave over his lord. Sufficient is it to the disciple that he may be becoming as his teacher, and the slave as his lord."

Now the word DISCIPLE does not simply mean follower; its literal meaning is learner; and that is why Paul, in deference to his Lord, was entirely content "to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the participation of His sufferings" (Philippians 3:10). It would never have crossed the Apostle's mind that in becoming the mouthpiece of the highest revelation of his Lord, he was, in some way, rising above the teaching of his Lord. Incidentally, none of us should ever seek to be regarded as anything higher than learners, even if on earth God should call us to a service of teaching and exposition because in such case we need no less to have the humble attitude of learners.

As the reader may be well aware, the words which appear before the four accounts of our Lord's earthly life in the Authorized Version—such as "The Gospel according to St. Matthew"—are no part of the original manuscript, but are merely embellishments provided by the translators, who, in their choice of this wording, must have misled thousands of saints into thinking these Accounts provided the Evangel; whereas they are, of course, the foundation on which it was afterward based. The late Alexander Thomson suggested that the title of The Gospel of Matthew might well be "Jesus Christ's Lineage Scroll;" that is, the Book which shows Him to be hereditary King of Israel. If we apply this attractive principle further the title of the Gospel of Mark becomes "The beginning of the Glad Tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God" (1:1) and Luke's title-preface is contained in his first four verses because they supply the reason for his narrative. When we come to John's Gospel we also find a title-preface in his first five verses—"In the beginning was the Word" and so on—followed by an expanded introduction in verses 6 to 18. That is what in fact those two passages amount to, and if we read them with care we obtain the sequence of the basic ideas which the remainder of John's Gospel develops; first the Word as life and light; then as the Word becomes flesh in the person of our Lord, we behold His glory, full of grace and truth. From all this we arrive at the two key words which characterize our Lord's Incarnation as John unfolds it: Grace and Truth in their fulness, and the fact that Grace and Truth came into being through Jesus Christ. So, John, at the very beginning of his Account, gives us the key to its content, which is that the fulness of Truth came

into being through the Lord Jesus; and we see how that fulness of Truth in Him encountered the Lie of the Slanderer through the unbelief and enmity of those who do his desires:

"Then Jesus said unto them, 'If God were your Father you should have loved Me, for I came forth and am arriving out of God. For neither have I come of myself, but He commissions Me. Wherefore do you not know My speech? Seeing that you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the Slanderer, and the desires of your father you are wanting to do. He was a man-killer from the beginning, and has not stood in the truth, seeing that the truth is not in him. Whenever he should be talking of that which is false, he is talking of his own, seeing that he is a liar, and the father of it. Yet I—seeing that I am speaking the truth, you are not believing in Me. Is anyone of you convicting Me concerning sin? If I am telling the truth, wherefore are not you believing in Me? He who is of God is hearing God's declarations. Therefore, you are not hearing, seeing you are not of God" (John 8:42-47 C. V.)

The words of our Lord here are foundation facts, and they were never contradicted by anything that the Spirit of Truth guided subsequent writers into, neither are they superseded anywhere.

If we will study this reply by the Lord Jesus, we shall find that several very important facts emerge from it. They may be placed under five headings, the first being that the primary basis of all evil is the Lie. Secondly, the reason for the lie (any lie) springs from within "out of his own;" that is, preoccupation with self, and **THEREFORE REPUDIATION OF TRUTH**, for the source of truth is **OUTSIDE SELF**. The Lord Jesus spoke truth because He "came forth out of God," Who is Truth—so the Lord Jesus Himself is "Truth", as He declared, "I am the truth." Thirdly, the Lord Jesus, having come forth from God, is known and loved by those for whom God is Father, for they recognize that they are hearing declarations of God. Fourthly, we learn that the Slanderer is talking out of his own, is devoted to self, so the truth is not in him, and therefore those of whom God is **NOT** Father are out of the Slanderer as father and want to carry out his desires. They wish to be man-killers and listen to the lie. And fifthly, since the Lord Jesus is speaking truth, those who prefer the lie, not being out of God, are not hearing Him; and not hearing Him, and not wanting to hear Him, they do not believe regarding Him.

So here, in perfectly logical steps, and from the mouth of our Lord Himself, the fact is established from Scripture **THAT WITHOUT TRUTH THERE CAN BE NO GENUINE FAITH**. And whenever people declare to the contrary, with most of them the fact still remains that they act as if for them faith means believing what they know to be untrue) This silly idea is never openly stated, but people's behavior indicates that this is what they think. Hence the hunger for truth and the love of truth which happily possesses some, for they need their faith to be genuine and firmly established, and for them without truth there can be no real faith. Here we have common sense allied to Scripture!

Now John's Gospel contains quite a number of peculiarities and surprises. For instance, on the one hand we have the Lord explaining the basic facts of New Birth to **THE** teacher of the Jews, Nicodemus; and on the other hand, He instructs a woman of doubtful morals regarding the spiritual nature of God, and His need for worship in spirit. Another surprising fact is that the word **FAITH** (pistis) is entirely absent from John's Gospel, yet **TRUTH** occurs twenty-five times, more often than in any other and the word **BELIEVE** occurs more than any other book of the Greek Scriptures.

Some may suggest that this absence of the word **FAITH** may have been due to a desire on the Apostle's part to be factual and avoid abstract ideas, but **TRUTH** is quite as much an abstract idea as **FAITH**, and in his choice of expressions, it seems that John goes deeply to the underlying basis of faith, for without truth there can be no genuine faith whatever. To believe a lie is not faith but credulity, and is the hall-mark of the foolish—or the wicked. There are but few passages of Scripture wherein truth and falsehood are sharply contrasted, but it is rewarding to examine such for our instruction. The first, as we have seen, is

the passage in John 8. The second, strikingly, is in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, which places the two writers in close harmony. Paul says:

"And therefore, God will be sending to them deception's operation, to cause them TO BELIEVE THE LIE; that all may be judged who are NOT BELIEVING IN THE TRUTH but delighting in unrighteousness" (II Thess. 2:11-12).

This Pauline prophecy is, of course, for the future, but the principle behind it is the same as it was in our Lord's earthly day; and, indeed, even now. Mankind still regards faith as believing what is untrue, and the reason they accept the lie is that they, like the Jews, have the Slanderer for their father, and he fashions their wills. Thus, it all boils down to what people WANT. If, as is painfully obvious, the majority desire the lie, their father the Slanderer is always ready and willing to provide it for them. Conditioned as all men are by hereditary mortality, and therefore prone to sin, their natural desire responds to the Slanderer's desire ••• until and unless God intervenes in grace.

In II Thess. 2:9-10, just preceding the passage we have quoted where Paul speaks of the lawless one and his lying miracles, he says those who follow him are "getting destruction; because the love of the truth they receive not unto their salvation." Note how closely this agrees with the words of the Lord Jesus which have been quoted here from John. The Gospel and the Epistle precisely touch at this point; and, as always in Scripture the harmony is perfect, for the seed of the Lie is shown by the Lord in John 8, and the ripe fruit from the seed apple

in Thessalonians Paul says that the love of the truth would be INTO their salvation, literally carrying them into salvation, for without the love of the truth there can be no faith, so therefore there can be no salvation. This is marvelous Divine logic:

Note also how well our Lord's words from John's account are confirmed by experience. We cannot believe regarding Him without this love of the truth, and we cannot have this love without loving God, and the love of God can exist only (as the Lord said) in those WHO ARE THEMSELVES "OUT OF GOD."

Someone will protest that no created being can make any claim to being out of God; and on the face of it, humanly speaking, this is true. But is it not true in and by the love of God and His grace.

"For you are saved through faith for grace, and this is naught of yours: it is God's oblation, not of works, lest anyone should be boasting. For we are His achievement, being created in Christ Jesus for (on) good works, which God makes ready beforehand in order that we should be walking in them" (Eph. 2:8-10 CV).

Regarding the word "on," R. B. Withers pointed out that the preposition EPI, followed by the Dative as here, has the force of "resting upon" or "on the ground of," or, "on the basis of." So, our creation is on the basis of good works Which God makes ready for us beforehand ••

And in Ephesians Paul does not fail to link grace and faith with truth, for there he writes (Of Christ):

"In whom you also, hearing the word of the truth, the evangel of your salvation, in Whom believing also, you were sealed with the spirit of the promise, the Holy One ••• (Eph. 1:13).

Thus, first from the words of our Lord, as He faced the Jews, and extending through to Paul as he wrote his last letters, the same golden chain appears. We are able to hear the word of the truth, the evangel of

our salvation because, as the Lord said, we are out of God; and we are out of God because we are His achievement. Surely, we can see a deep harmony between John's Gospel on the one hand and Second Thessalonians with Ephesians on the other hand. We should not be surprised to find this harmony in God's Word, unless we have been thrown out of center by ultradispensational teaching! It is perfectly true that Paul's Epistles are mainly concerned with us, believers from the Gentiles, people altogether outside covenant: whereas the Lord's earthly ministry was to the covenant people, but when we get down to basic principles we are bound to find that they contain some things which are the same for everyone.

If we can liberate ourselves from the extravagances of "dispensationalism" we must surely see that Romans begins with God's Evangel, which is addressed through Paul both to Jews and Gentiles, though not AS Jews and Gentiles; rather simply as SINNERS. When Paul had established that basic evangel was free to build up his own evangel in the remainder of that great Epistle, submitting that which BELONGS ONLY TO GENTILES and concerns only such among self-confessed sinners WHO COME TO GOD AS GENTILES. This evangel, which Paul calls "my evangel," rises to the greatest perfection in his Prison Epistles, yet even in Ephesians we find things which are, and will be, applicable to all God's people; in the future as in the past and present; because they are all part of the fundamental truth which runs throughout the Greek Scriptures.

We hear a great deal about "rightly dividing" the Word of Truth, a phrase more accurately rendered as "correctly partitioning" in the Concordant Version or "skillfully handling" according to Rotherham. It could well be expressed as "marking a straight, direct course in our understanding" of the Word of Truth; always distinguishing the things that differ which, as Paul wrote, is of primary concern in all true Scripture study.

This means, in effect, that we must distinguish between what is true for all men at all times and what is special under certain conditions, as when Israel (one part of humanity) is under covenant with God, or on the other hand, when no covenant at all exists—as at present. This is the true "division," and if we fail to get that clear in our minds we shall be always at the mercy of "theories" and therefore miss the truth. Great would be the gain to any if they would only drop the unfortunate word "dispensational," so widely misunderstood, and realize instead that the true "boundary" rests between what belongs to covenant with its sign of circumcision and what belongs to ourselves who enjoy absolute freedom from covenant. While Paul's evangel is in force everything connected with Israel's covenant. (apart from the purely spiritual implications) is under the curse of the law, broken and impotent. There will come a time when law and covenant are restored.

Our predecessor, The Differentiator, had for its object the task of distinguishing between those things in Scripture which truly differ, but its Editors were equally careful NOT to distinguish between things which DO NOT DIFFER. To improvise differences which do not exist (except in some pet theory) is quite as bad as ignoring differences which do exist—the favorite pursuit of orthodoxy. Either course is evil and harmful and both in essence are of "the lie."

The Lord Jesus told His disciples that the Spirit of Truth would be guiding them (literally) "into the truth every," meaning there was further and complete truth yet to be revealed. But this does not imply that what He had already revealed was not a part of the whole truth. Indeed, humanly speaking, it was possibly even the most important part, for His words are the foundation on which we all must build.

Other passages where the truth and the lie are contrasted should be observed here also. In Romans 1:25 Paul refers to those "who indeed altar the truth of God into the lie," and in Ephesians 4:25 he writes further "Wherefore, putting off the lie be talking truth each with his associate..."

The Apostle John adds his own comments in accord with what he had first reported from the words of our Lord in his own account: —

"No lie is out of the truth. Who is the liar if not the one dissenting, declaring that Jesus is not the Christ? This one is the antichrist, disowning the Father and the Son" (I John 2:22-23) and because of this John admonishes his own readers: —

"The anointing which you obtained from Him is remaining in you, and you have no need that anyone should be teaching you; but His anointing is teaching you concerning all, and is true and is no lie; even according as it teaches you, be remaining in it" (I John 2:26-27).

This anointing applies not only to those of whom John writes, for Paul also lists four things which God has done for us: "confirming us together with you," "Anoints us," "Seals us," and "Giving the earnest of the spirit in our hearts" (II Cor. 1.21,22). So, the truth is still the same, that the only way to be taught is in Christ, the "Anointable" One, the One fit to be anointed, as His anointing is teaching us, and ours is as His own, with Holy Spirit and power.

John completes his comments with a reference to doing righteousness, which takes us back to a corresponding verse in Timothy: "who are not believing in the truth but delighting in the unrighteousness." If you fail in the first you inevitably succeed in the second: The converse also applies, for we may well doubt if anyone who passionately loves and seeks the truth is ever really unrighteous. This is a profound subject but if we look back in Scripture on the various persons described as "righteous," we shall find that many of them, Abraham for instance, never had the good fortune to come in contact with God's evangel, but rested entirely on God's promise; "In thee Shall all nations be blessed." They believed God, and that was sufficient for Him. They believed all they were asked to believe; and, like Cornelius in Acts 10, if they had received more light, they would have believed that also.

There are but few people today who seek TRUTH FOR ITS OWN SAKE, though they may do so for "practical" ends such as research or personal profit; whereas the true believer has an insatiable desire for the truth of God as He has set it forth in His Word. It was in quest of that ideal for His disciples that our Lord entreated the Father on their behalf in that sublime prayer of His which appears also in John's Gospel, chapter 17: "I have given them Thy truth ••• Thy Word is truth. What we have to do is believe it; that is what truth is for; so that is what God's Word is for. That is the position reduced to its simplest terms. Moreover, as BELIEVERS we have no excuse for not accepting truth, once it is presented to us. That, indeed, is the main function of FAITH.

Finally, here, let to these further words another general truth, which perhaps we seldom us turn anew and reverently listen from John's Epistle where we find equally applicable to all, yet to give sufficient heed:

"If we should be saying, 'Sin we have not,' we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we should be avowing our sin, FAITHFUL is He and righteous, that He should be forgiving our sin and should be cleansing us from every unrighteousness. If we should be saying 'We have not sinned'; LIAR WE ARE MAKING HIM, and His word is not in us" (I John 1:8-10).

So, we see that TRUTH is set as definitely against UNRIGHTEOUSNESS as it is set against LIES.

That word ADIKIA, unrighteousness, should never be translated "injustice," for the idea of justice does not enter into the word at all and is irrelevant thereto. The fact is that RIGHTEOUSNESS and FAITH, on which alone it can be based, are the main targets of the enemy.

We conclude here with a lovely word from Paul to the Corinthians (I 13:6) which shows the relation between righteousness, rejoicing, and truth:

"Love is not rejoicing over the unrighteousness, yet is jointly-rejoicing as to the truth."

So, Love's rejoicing is collective as truth continues to unfold to us, may we all share in this rejoicing.

Cecil J. Blay (Treasures of Truth, Instalment Twelve, February-March 1974)

THE VITAL ELEMENT

When an individual is called by God (and it is necessary to remember that He chooses us, and not we Him) and is joined to the body of those whom Paul refers to as "called saints", a process comes into operation which is as real and definite as anything which may take place in a physical sense although it may have no physical manifestation whatever. In fact, it is true to say that this process is MORE REAL than anything physical, because such manifestations are mortal and therefore temporary, while this is of a spiritual nature and therefore permanent. The things that are seen are temporary, while the things that are not seen are age-enduring, eonian.

It has been shown elsewhere that those called may be referred to with equal accuracy as "callable", but the only human part in salvation is faith, and that is not of ourselves for it is the gift of God. The evangel is the power of God unto salvation: "To everyone who is believing". All who have received God's gift of faith can meet the simple condition of relying upon the Trustworthy One; yet faith creates nothing, does nothing, deserves nothing and has no efficacy apart from Christ Who is its Object, for faith is not a savior (*). If I entrust myself to a lift that I may reach the tenth floor, I contribute nothing to the power that raises me, nor does my ignorance of the mechanism prevent my being elevated to that floor. If some are not called, and not given this faith, this must be the sublime purpose of Him Who locks up all together in unbelief in order that ultimately, He may be merciful to all. The Epistle to the Romans, once described as "the profoundest book extant", stands by right in the forefront of Paul's Epistles, for its teaching is basic and all his later revelations are based on it. Its chief value is that it reveals God and His salvation in a full, orderly and systematic way—and note that it was written to those who ALREADY BELIEVED, for their instruction: the saints need the gospel. We sometimes hear a believer say, (*) Human works of faith operating through love must not be mistaken for God's work of grace whereby we are saved. They are the works which RESULT FROM salvation; the fruits of His Achievement Who creates us in Christ Jesus "for good works". (I Thess. 1:3; Gal. 5:6; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13).

"I am not a Bible student; I am only an evangelist", yet Romans deals, for the larger part, with the evangel only, and one cannot be a really effective evangelist unless and until he knows Romans. It was not enough for Paul to say to the jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved", although this was adequate for a terrified man who was convinced of his need for salvation. When the man was calmed we read: "And they speak to him the word of the Lord, together with all that were in his house", with the result that they believed in God and were baptized. The very minimum of Paul's evangel is that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He was roused on the third day. The evangel of God concerns His Son, in Whom the whole of our salvation already exists, and our completeness eventually has to be a conformity to Christ on the cross and in the glory. We are told that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh; that we were crucified with Him, that we bear the likeness of His resurrection, and that these bodies of humiliation will be transfigured and made glorious like His. Salvation means all this and much more.

Romans 6:3-4 contains a profound statement which the Apostle assumes his readers already know, since it is the very basis of their sainthood. He first says: "We died to sin", and this fact is implicit in the spiritual unity which we enjoy with Christ Jesus. In short, as surely as Christ died to sin, all those who are in Christ Jesus are baptized into His death, and so die to sin, our relation thereto being the same as His, and as He lives to God so in Him the believer lives to God. This is not a physical experience for each of us, but a spiritual fact revealed for us, and our duty is to reckon it true. And then the apostle writes: "or are you ignorant that as many as are baptized into Christ Jesus are baptized into His death? Then we are

entombed together with Him through baptism into death; that, even as Christ was roused from among the dead through the glory of the Father, thus we also should be walking in newness of life", (Rom. 6:3-4).

It must be evident that the truth of the believer's death and crucifixion with Christ was central in Paul's earliest teaching, but many believers even now find it difficult to believe his statement that they died to sin. They readily admit that they OUGHT TO, but experience dictates otherwise. Yet the point must be pressed that this affirmation by Paul claims that all who are in Christ Jesus died to sin. Paul does not appeal to our experience or his own; he declares a truth on which we are to reckon. He points to Christ's death to sin, His burial, His resurrection, and His present life to God. Then he says that **THOSE IN CHRIST JESUS TAKE PART IN THESE ACHIEVEMENTS**.

The Apostle evidently realized that this assertion might puzzle some, but if they were puzzled it must be that they did not understand the significance of baptism, for it is by baptism into His death that we die to sin. His words are tinged with reproof, for the significance of baptism is something which every believer ought to know, since it is the vital element in sainthood. Notice that Paul writes "as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus", and it means that all without exception who are baptized into Christ are baptized into His death. Therefore, such baptism is not something we still have to seek. There are not some believers who died to sin and some who did not, for **ALL** are baptized into Christ Jesus. We are in Christ not by faith but by baptism, and of course the baptized are only those who believe, yet Scripture asserts that it is not faith but **BAPTISM** that unites us to Him. Faith is active, and we have to exercise it constantly, but baptism takes place only once, upon believing, and the subject is passive, for he is baptized by Another. It is ours to believe, but it is Christ's to baptize. He does not enquire as to our willingness, nor call a meeting to decide whether or not a "candidate" shall be accepted. The Lord alone knows who are His, and He baptizes every one of them—and no others. Justification is by faith in His blood, but union with Christ is by means of baptism. This part of Romans is the only part where baptism is mentioned, where Paul is explaining spiritual union with Christ. **BAPTISM IS ESSENTIAL**, for the saints are in Christ only because they were baptized into Him.

This baptism confers **ACTUAL SPIRITUAL UNION** with Christ, and by virtue of that union it gives each one a place before God in Christ which enables us to meet all the righteous demands of God; demands which Paul has argued at length in previous chapters of his letter. Let us repeat, baptism is the vital element in our relationship to God—and by virtue thereof we can stand before God in Christ, while without it we are lost.

Paul makes a very clear statement in the two verses we have quoted, but despite this clarity it is sad that there is so little agreement among expositors and teachers as to what baptism into Christ is, and what it means for all who believe. The reason for this confusion is that most of them are thinking of the wrong baptism! Those who think of immersion in water are not thinking on the same lines as the Apostle, for **SPIRITUAL FACTS**, not meaningful ritual, are the subject of his writing. He cannot be speaking of water baptism for he is dealing with realities—baptism in spirit, union with Christ, of death with Him, of entombment with Him, of resurrection with Him, and being alive to God in Him—all spiritual facts, not ritual, nor ideas in the believer's mind. If we substitute water baptism for spirit baptism here we find ourselves in very great difficulties, not the least being that logic would demand that only those who have experienced water baptism are in Christ at all. Not even the most fervid immersionist would admit this, but there is no other conclusion if Paul has water baptism in mind. And I believe it true that no spiritually-minded person could accept the idea that any ritual baptism can actually incorporate us into the body of Christ. Once, however, when we see and realize that Paul is speaking of a baptism of the spirit, our hearts are delighted as we appreciate this glorious, satisfying gospel; our minds are enlightened and all that seems puzzling vanishes.

One cannot but wonder why good men cling so strongly to the ritual, the external physical rite, forgetting and ignoring the spiritual reality. We admit that it is a ritual full of significance, but it must be without any real spiritual efficacy. Look at the Scriptures! When water baptism was first instituted it was plainly taught that it was but a symbol of spirit baptism. Wherever you may search the Scriptures for the first mention of Water baptism—whether in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts—you will find that the speaker in each case points us away from John's baptism in water to Christ's baptism in holy spirit. Baptists persist in clinging to John, but John persistently points to One "mightier than I" Who would come after him and baptize in spirit instead of water (Matt. 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33). Our Lord Himself carefully points out the difference between John's baptism and His: "You shall be baptized in holy spirit after not many days" (Acts 1:5); a promise fulfilled at Pentecost to the believing Jews. Later, when Peter observed that the holy spirit fell on Cornelius and his friends, he said "Now I am reminded of the Lord's declaration as He said that 'John indeed baptizes in water, yet you shall be baptized in holy spirit'" (Acts 11:16).

It has been well said that the key of water baptism fails to turn in the lock of Romans 6:3-4 and Galatians 3:27, but when forced it breaks the lock. Why not try the other key, that of baptism in spirit, which opens the lock instead of breaking it?

One could quote at length from the ablest commentators on this vital passage (Rom. 6:3-4) and in all cases, we shall find that the idea of water baptism has blinded the writers to the meaning of the words of inspiration, and trapped them into a virtual denial of spiritual unity with Christ. We may hear about the believer's "wondrous place in Christ", but we are not told how a saint is really placed into Him. It cannot be by means of ritual, as we shall all agree, but there must be an alternative if the saints are in Christ Jesus, because by some means they have been put into Him. There must be some means whereby a real unity with Christ is brought about, and if God reveals in His Word that baptism is the means, it must be obvious that there is a baptism that is quite free from the objections which can be brought against any ritual.

If one has carefully studied the writings on this subject, the words are familiar. "It is baptism Christ-ward" some say. "In the rite they declare their acceptance of Him as Savior" say others. We are told that baptism is an outward act by which the faith of the convert is expressed, and a symbol of the believer's union with Christ. Such statements are not only inadequate and misleading; they distort the language of Scripture. Baptism is not "Christward", not a symbol of a union which is not actual, and it is not man's acknowledgment or expression of faith. Baptism is the saving act of the great Baptizer in holy spirit by which He unites His saints to Himself. It is essential and vital for every one of them.

The fact that Christ Himself should supersede John the Baptist in spirit, and that He should baptize in spirit, has become practically forgotten, despite the emphasis placed upon it in the four Gospels and the Acts.

Theologians love to create psychological explanations for Scriptures which really need no explaining, merely believing. We read about "Paul's doctrine of the mystical union with Christ", which is said to be based on his own experience. Now (however it may be described) spiritual intercourse with God is a fact in the experience of some believers, and always has been, but it is untrue to speak of union with Christ as a "mystical union", for it is a real and vital union and does not exist merely in spiritual emotion. The term "mystical union" would give to personal experience a standing and authority which belongs only to Scripture. Romans 6 assures us that baptism in spirit is a part of Christ's saving work FOR EACH OF US as truly as was His obedience unto death. Incidentally, Paul does not say much about his personally intimate experience of God; if he is in an ecstasy, he said, it is to God—and he does not publish it. When he writes epistles he unfolds God's gospel, which was not accomplished in the realm of religious emotion

but in Christ. It is dishonest and unfair to Paul if we substitute him and his special gifts and attainments for Christ and His Baptism in spirit—the baptism by which he makes all, even the least gifted of His people, members of His body.

And here we ought to underline just what it is that this union with Christ consists in, not "mystically" but in spiritual fact. First of all, it gives the believer the same judicial release from sin that Christ has, so that man now has three relationships to Him. As a creature, man is related to Christ as the Firstborn of all creation in Whom the universe was created. As a man he is related to the last Adam, or Head of the race. As a saved man he is in Christ Jesus before God, in Whom all the claims of sin and law have been met. Put another way, by creation man is united to the Firstborn; by the Incarnation man is related to Him as Head of the race; and by baptism man is united to the crucified and risen Head of the church. This is the spiritual reality of relationship into which Christ baptizes us. His creative work, His self-emptying and His obedience unto death are three of His deeds which are completed by the fourth, the baptism by which He also unites us to Himself as having died to sin and come alive unto God. This is the glory of the saving relationship!

Water baptism at one time had its place as a symbol and it should help to interpret the reality to which it pointed, but the ritual has been so interpreted that the reality has been lost sight of. "Are you ignorant", Paul asks the Romans, and he could well ask us today, for such ignorance has no excuse. When he wrote to the Corinthians he declared that he was not commissioned to baptize, but to preach the evangel, and in I Cor. 12:13 he writes of a baptism which can do what no ritual can: "In one spirit we are all baptized into one body". If water baptism by a man could baptize into Christ Jesus it would be more important, because more effective, than preaching. But if Christ's baptism is the only one remaining, having superseded John's baptism, since Christ is the only one who can baptize in spirit, we can see very well why Paul was not commissioned to baptize (I Cor. 1:17). The so-called "great commission" of Matthew 28:19-20 (which, incidentally, the twelve never attempted to carry out, nor did they go beyond the limits of Israel's land, for they knew that baptism applied to a future day) has long been regarded as "the marching order for the church", but Paul knew he was not so commissioned.

The importance of baptism in spirit lies in the fact that it is as indispensable to our salvation as is our justification. There are many references to the spiritual realities which are ours in Christ, and baptism ranks in importance with the impartation of His life by the spirit, and all who have life in Christ are baptized into Him; sealed, anointed, and given "the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12). It is only by baptism into Christ in spirit that anyone can be placed into Christ Jesus and put on Christ. As for this, hear what God says:

"For as many as are baptized into Christ, put on Christ, in Whom there is no Jew nor yet Greek, no slave nor yet free, no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27-28).

This is not a figure which represents membership in a visible earthly society, but a revelation of the fact of spiritual unity in Christ Jesus which binds into one all who believe.

There are two serious errors which arise from the failure to see which baptism Paul means, the first is that it causes some to deny that there has been any spiritual baptism since Pentecostal times, and the second is that many do not know what baptism in spirit is and does, so therefore they look for some EXPERIENCE. This can also cause anxiety, for we are reminded that "If anyone has not the spirit of Christ, that one is not His". Many who are in no doubt that they are in Christ long for the baptism of the spirit. God's answer to them is His revelation through the Apostle that they ARE baptized, together with a command to reckon it true. The baptism by Christ in spirit gives them their position in Him, and this gift which makes Christ and His saints one is greater than any of the gifts of the Pentecostal era.

It is strange that some should think they are "converted", "born again" or "regenerated" without receiving the spirit; and because of this they look for some spiritual manifestation (such as speaking with tongues) as a sort of "second work of grace". This they would mistake for the baptism in spirit, but filling with spirit and baptism in spirit are two very different things serving very different purposes. The baptism at Pentecost identified the believer with the name of Christ rather than with the person of Christ. Under Peter's ministry none were baptized into Christ Jesus; only Paul reveals this wonderful process. And such baptism is not accompanied by the proof of spiritual demonstrations such as the gift of tongues. "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit", and such a person needs no "gifts" to prove it to him! God's Word is greater evidence than all experience.

Finally, let us note that baptism occurs once, and is initial, while filling with spirit may be repeated over and over again. **WE ARE NEVER TOLD TO BE BAPTISED IN SPIRIT**, but we **ARE** told to be filled with spirit. Instead of seeking "a fresh baptism of the spirit", we must be rather filled with spirit, and this fulness usually overflows in service. We must not pray for baptism in spirit, for that is Christ's work and He does not fail to do it; nor, in fact, should we pray to be filled with spirit by God, for we have only to obey His command, "Be filled with spirit" (Eph. 5:18). It is something we may do—we may be filled with flesh or spirit according to our occupation with either, so the choice is ours.

We are baptized once, "There is one baptism", and in this we are made one with Christ in His saving deeds. But not only are we baptized into His Person, **WE ARE BAPTISED INTO HIS DEATH ALSO**, His death to sin. That is how we die to sin, and what His death to sin means to Him it must mean to all who are baptized into it. That death of His was for me, and more than that, it is actually made mine by baptism into Christ, so that I am dead to sin just as He is. The value of His death becomes mine, not by my faith but by baptism in spirit, that vital element.

This is true evangelistic truth which faith should receive and in which it should rejoice. The believer is to contemplate Christ's death to sin and His release from it in order that He may live unto God. Then thank God that by baptism in spirit this death to sin is ours also. None ever tasted death as Christ did, or endured the shame of the cross. There are depths and breadths and lengths and heights of meaning in His death that we cannot apprehend; but since ye are baptized into it all its deliverance and wealth of blessing is ours.

The whole of this passage (Rom. 6:3-4) and its relationship to ourselves should be closely assimilated. The fact that "we were buried with Him through baptism into death" is very important, for if we share His death on the Cross we also share a place with Him in the tomb, but it is now an empty tomb, and Colossians 2:12 shows both the significance of this and the purpose of baptism:

"Being entombed together with Him in baptism (in Whom you were raised together also through faith in the operation of God, Who rouses Him from among the dead, you also being dead in the offences and uncircumcision of your flesh), **HE MAKES US ALIVE TOGETHER JOINTLY WITH HIM...**"

Paul's writings are full of baptism, but baptism in spirit, and if we heed his teaching as we should we shall seek to enjoy that spiritual life and walk according to the risen life of Christ. For as the Apostle says in Romans 6:4:

"Then we were entombed together with Him through baptism into death, that, even as Christ was roused from among the dead through the glory of the Father, **THUS WE ALSO SHOULD BE WALKING IN NEWNESS OF LIFE**".

This is how God values our conduct, and this is His idea of ethical perfection, for we see that in our baptism and its outcome we find a new standard, "Thus also we should be walking", a new principle, "newness", a new power, "life", and a new motive, "the glory of the Father".

Cecil J. Blay (Treasures of Truth, Instalment Seven, November-December 1972)

A LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE

A booklet recently received and intended for believers compares the state of present world conditions with those which prevailed in the time of Noah and assumes from this that we live in the time our Lord foresaw in Matt. 24:37: "As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of man". For reasons about to follow here, we dissent from that conclusion and we trust this paper may help to dispel much unsound and unhealthy speculation about Messianic prophecy.

No one will deny that there are similarities between the evils of modern society and the much greater evils of the days before the Flood, but such an approach to prophecy is no more than making circumstances fit cases. It is not a desirable method of dealing with Scripture.

The importance of understanding prophecy as far as we are able, like the understanding of all Scripture, is something no true believer will deny. That we share this interest is evident from the papers we have already published which attempt to throw a little light on the widely misunderstood Seventy Sevens of Daniel's vision. Not all may realize, however, that outside the Book of Revelation and the recorded words of our Lord, the Greek Scriptures contain very little about "prophecy", meaning here a forecast of God's future purposes. Much has been made by some exponents out of very little, and Pauline prophecies for the church which is the body of Christ have been much confused with Messianic prophecies which are for Israel; especially those spoken by our Lord or appearing in the Book of Revelation, the Unveiling.

There are three distinct kinds of Scriptural prophecy and it is the confusing of these which has contributed so much to the general confusion of the whole subject.

The first kind is SYMBOLIC. Most of the prophecies of Daniel and in Revelation are of this kind, signs or symbolic figures and ideas, seldom understood until AFTER the events prophesied.

The second kind is PARABOLIC. A notable example is the set of parables in Matthew 13, described as "the secrets of the kingdom of the heavens". They are simple in form, but not in content.

The third kind is DIRECT. Such prophecies are forecasts, made in plain and unambiguous terms that admit no doubt or hesitation about their meaning. Important examples are Matthew 13 and 25 (remarkable chapters for containing many parables); also Acts 1:11 and 3:21 which are as clear and direct as words could be. Prophecies of particular interest to present believers are Rom. 11:25-32, I Cor. 15, I Thess. 4:13-17, II Thess. 2:5-12, II Tim. 3:1-5 and II Tim. 4:3-4, also Jer. 31:31-34 which is repeated in Hebrews 8:8-12. This latter prophecy concerning Israel is often quoted in theological writings and if the authors indicate they really do believe it, they can be accepted as fairly safe guides, for here is a prophecy so definite that its meaning does not admit any argument or dispute and is capable of complete verification when the fulfilment occurs. It is a prophecy obviously not yet fulfilled, for God has not yet imparted His laws to Israel's comprehension nor inscribed them on their hearts, nor has He done so to any people on earth since the Ascension.

The Apostle Peter has clear words for the guidance of all students of this fascinating subject, to which, he says, we should "take heed in our hearts". That passage from II Pet. 1:19-21 was translated as literally as possible by R. B. Withers in the following words:

"And we are hearing, more confirmed, the prophetic word, to which ideally you are doing, taking heed in your hearts; as to a lamp appearing in a squalid place, until what time the day should be dawning, and the morning star should be rising; knowing this first: that no prophecy of Scripture is becoming its own explanation; for not by the will of men was prophecy carried on at any time, but carrying on by holy spirit talk holy men of God".

This is a difficult passage, and to realize how very faulty an idea we can get from incorrect translation this rendering should be compared with the Authorized Version.

Paul, in Romans 16:26, refers to some of his own statements as "prophetic scriptures", but Peter has reference to "the prophetic word" which has a wider scope and includes the whole of Scripture.

There are two important lessons to learn from what Peter says in the above passage. The first is that the prophetic word is as "a lamp appearing in a squalid (or a dark) place". Peter referred not to a powerful light but a lamp like then in common use, a little light only from a wick floating in oil, hardly brighter than a candle. It is sufficient to shed light on its immediate surroundings and to guide us for a step or two on our way. It is NOT the type of lamp which illuminates a modern motorway. If we expect prophecy to light our way for years ahead we expect in vain.

The second lesson is that we must not expect prophecy to be self-explanatory. Indeed, the finest student will confess how difficult it is to explain clearly every aspect of Bible prophecy. Some may like to prepare "charts" of the future, and no doubt we should have found it very convenient if God had set out a time-table for us, but that is NOT the way prophecy works, it is not a kind of glorified fortune-telling. It is a very limited light in a dark place, and its limitation is an invitation for our faith to rest on Christ alone, and a challenge to believe what has been revealed, nothing more and nothing less. It is also a challenge to us to search for revelation, and to have the divine patience granted to us to be satisfied when our search comes up against a blank wall. If prophecy were a detailed outline of history written in advance there would be no room for faith, since we could see all the way ahead. The righteous lives by his FAITH.

In Paul's epistles, except for the tremendous revelation of the secret concerning ourselves, our changing and snatching away, there is very little prophetic teaching other than some reassuring words to the Thessalonians concerning the Day of the Lord which, in view of their then current troubles, they imagined might have taken place already; and, if so, they were unable to understand why they were still here on earth. He tells them of some of the events which will precede that Day; the apostasy, the unveiling of the man of sin and his session in God's temple; then of his fearful end. All this was evidence to them that their current fears were unfounded.

If we take our Lord's utterances as recorded in Matthew 24 and 25, also Luke 21:24-28, we find that He put events relating to Israel in a sequence commencing with the fulfilment of the times of the Gentiles and Israel's attaining complete control of Jerusalem. For some expositors who regard all but the last of the seventy sevens as long since fulfilled, here is where they conclude the final seven-year week of Daniel begins; yet we assume that by now our present readers may foresee with us that from there is where the ENTIRE "seventy weeks of years" only begin to apply as a premillennial era for Israel's renaissance, which includes first the reconstruction of Jerusalem and a new temple where Levitical services must resume. Later in that future era, as a consequence of Israel's foretold apostasy, the man of sin will appear; and in the midst of the last seven-year week he will establish his "abomination of desolation" in the Holy Place while faithful ones will be fleeing from Jerusalem because of the oncoming Great Tribulation.

Meanwhile the Day of the Lord will have crept in quietly like a thief in the night (I Thess. 5:2) even as the man of sin is then enjoying a brief time of world acclaim under morally degenerate conditions,

comparable to Noah's day. Men will be saying "peace and security," unmindful that extermination is standing closely by, for the man of sin is then about to be vanquished just before the unveiling of the Son of Man and by "the forth shining of His presence" (II Thess. 2:8-9). Though our Lord will be sending His messengers with the loud sounding of a trumpet to assemble His chosen ones of Israel (Matt. 24:31), the context where that trumpeting appears is so obviously different from Paul's prophecy of a meeting in "air" at the eve of this present era that it has no remote allusion to "the trumpet of God" which saints of the past and the present are to hear. To THEM, our Lord most certainly will not come "as a thief in the night".

The above events, in broad outline, are practically all that are revealed of the future sequence of prophetic events, apart from the details (not always easy to understand) given to us in the Revelation end by the Hebrew prophets. We are well aware of the many attempts that have been made to relate these details to a general sequence of events, some of them very ingenious, but to the earnest student none of them affords complete satisfaction.

But from both Matthew 24 and II Thessalonians it is quite plain that the Temple of God will be rebuilt before the conclusion of this eon, with Israel gathered in the land in full possession of Jerusalem; yet neither the regaining of Jerusalem nor the rebuilding of the Temple are DIRECTLY prophesied as specific events; only indirectly and by implication. Meanwhile the present return of Jews to Palestine and the now existing state of Israel are not any fulfilment of Hebrew prophecy, so these by themselves do not indicate if the end-time may or may not be near. There are other indications apparent to the enlightened eye which may well indicate that the full complement of the Gentiles is soon to be realized, but since the precise time is a secret, it is something we cannot determine by any imaginary fulfilment of Hebrew prophecy. When we say there are many general indications that the beginning of the end-time may be near, we hasten to add that they all FALL SHORT OF PROOF. Yet one comforting fact is clear and certain: God's wrath cannot come into operation as long as Romans 5 and II Corinthians 5 remain present truth. Among its many other glories, Romans states assuredly that we shall be saved from wrath through Him and Corinthians underlines the fact of reconciliation. To all who come within the scope of those provisions, this entirely precludes any future exposure to wrath. Therefore, we may flatly reject any suggestion that we shall remain on earth when God's wrath appears. If we were we should need to be sheltered from it and Scripture does not indicate HOW. Indeed, the only reference to shelter from the wrath of that day is restricted to some of the faithful of Israel, such as the woman of Revelation 12, and no one could logically contend that she represents the Pauline church. Dr. Bullinger settled that idea once and for all.

We must not speculate on what may or may not happen to the present state of Israel in the foreseeable near future. Even if it should involve a set-back as disastrous as those of the Dark Ages, that would have no real bearing on our own expectation. The fact remains that until now no Hebrew prophecies have been fulfilled which were not already fulfilled when Paul wrote II Thessalonians. It is not for us to prophesy, and if we attempt to do so we shall only swell the ranks of false prophets and disillusioned date-setters.

Many attempts have been made to interpret Revelation—some which are worthy of praise—but the book remains a vision or series of visions, some of which appear to be literal though others may be figurative; a distinction by no means simple to determine. It is all TRUE, but we are in no position to interpret its truth. That eminent scholar R. B. Withers once said that he was very skeptical of our ability AT PRESENT to sort out the prophecies of the Apocalypse and the unfulfilled prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures: "If we cannot claim unanimously to have accomplished such sorting out of the prophecies which are ours, how can we hope to do so with prophecies which are, after all, primarily Israel's? I would say that in these matters it is better to be too cautious than too rash".

Readers much fascinated with the study of prophecy are aware that there are three systems of interpretation, usually classified as Preterist, Historicist and Futurist. The first of these regards all prophecies as fulfilled long ago, so it can be ignored as making nonsense of Scripture. The second teaches that the prophecies of Revelation began to be fulfilled as soon as they were written, so it too can be ignored as making nonsense of Scripture, as one may readily see by comparing Historicist expositions with what Scripture actually says. Thus, the only sane interpretation is the Futurist; but as Alexander Thomson once pointed out, there was never any reason for INTRODUCING a Futurist system, for it was ALWAYS there for anyone who might read the Scriptures! Even so long ago as when the Wiclif Bible first appeared anyone reading Revelation chapter one would have been bound to observe that the events mentioned there were to happen in the future.

Sir Robert Anderson pointed out from I Peter 1:11-12 that THE PROPHETS THEMSELVES who were inspired to foretell the Lord's coming "inquired and sought diligently" as to the meaning of their own prophecies: Tales of suffering mingled with visions of glory must have seemed to them as inconsistent and impossible to harmonize. Even the Lord's disciples who were privileged to receive His own teaching and see the actual events pertaining to Him which appear to us now as literal fulfilments of Scripture were baffled and perplexed. "We trusted," they said, "that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel", but the very death WHICH SECURED THAT REDEMPTION seemed to them as the grave of all their hopes. Are we to learn nothing from this? The humble and earnest truth-seeker will accept everyone of the prophecies God has given us for the future and will confidently look for their literal fulfilment, but he will not venture to argue from the divine words; still less add to them or paraphrase them.

It was an enormous service that Dr. Bullinger did for us in showing conclusively that the Church which is Christ's body is altogether outside the scope of the Revelation, yet foolish attempts continue in misapplying the letters for the seven ecclesias of Revelation to the history of Christendom. The book of Revelation is entirely within the time-series of Hebrew prophecy while we are, most definitely, entirely outside of it. The whole of our position, our standing, and our hope as the body of Christ depend on this fundamental fact. If we abandon this position, no place remains for us in God's plan, for within the Scriptural time-series there is room for only two alternatives: 1) Israel as God's covenant people; or, 2) judgment for the entire world. Paul's evangel is entirely absent both from Hebrew prophecy and from Revelation.

Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Sevens was formerly thought to simplify matters which more recently we have found it does not. Research by the late Commander Steedman has shed much new light on this subject which in turn tends to illuminate the forthcoming era of Israel's renaissance when they once again shall be AMMI, God's covenant people. From the time of our Lord's earthly ministry even until now they remain LO AMMI, "not My people". Thus, present attempts to fit Hebrew prophecy into the times of the Gentiles are contrary to all revelation. The whole matter should be treated with extreme caution, and with due reverence, for the issues are far from plain. Since those qualities of caution and reverence are often conspicuously absent from the efforts of those who profess to "explain" prophecy, we must be doubly careful to avoid any pretense of understanding things which are not now clear. We must carefully refrain from speculation, especially such foolish speculation as attempts to identify Roman Catholicism with Babylon. That sort of thing is dragging God's Holy Word down into the mud.

As we pause to reflect, if any people had been entitled to know "the times and the eras", it would have been those eleven Apostles who remained before Pentecost, but our Lord EXPLICITLY DENIED that information, even to them. It is hard to understand Why any Christian should try to wrest from Scripture such information of God's earthly plans as He has withheld thus far even from His earthly people.

Lest we might venture into the realms of pure fantasy, we should take warning from the vain attempts of Historicists who have combed the records of history and chronology to support their fallacious systems and false calculation of dates which have long since failed. They come perilously near to the sin whereof Revelation warns, that of "taking away from the words of the book of this prophecy". Ignoring the truth that the present time is Wholly outside the chronological sequence of Israel's prophecies, they seem undeterred by repeated failures and go merrily on, yet there are better ways of wasting time than to trifle with Scripture prophecies, and this is far from what Peter meant by Acts 2:17.

Sir Robert Anderson once said that prophecy was not given so that we might be able to prophesy, but as a witness to God when the time of fulfilment comes. Prophecy is a REVELATION, not an invitation to a guessing contest. This fact can be tested against such prophecies as have been already fulfilled, for many of them were by no means explicit beforehand but they became instantly plain when the time of their fulfilment had arrived.

Here as in all other matters relating to the understanding of God's Word, if we are on the wrong course it makes no difference to our direction whether we are ten yards or ten miles along the way, we are still going far astray. It is a fact of history that not one, not even one single event in the series of Hebrew prophecy has been fulfilled in the last 1900 years and longer. We should not even need the Scriptures to tell us that, because the fact itself is obvious, but the Scriptures also confirm the fact that during the entire period while Paul's evangel has been in force the whole series of events which relate prophetically to Israel have remained in abeyance. That period constitutes a long gap as far as Hebrew prophecy is concerned and it is only those who refuse to acknowledge Paul's special ministry who attempt to fill that gap with past or present imaginary fulfilments.

If we recognize and believe this Scripturally Testified truth, it serves greatly to fortify our faith and increase our understanding of God's Word. First it serves to reassure our minds that ever since the call of Paul, no Hebrew prophecy has been or is now in course of fulfilment; not even Matthew 24 nor any part of Revelation. This liberates us from any misplaced preoccupation with "earthly things" and enables us to "seek that which is above, where Christ is" (Col. 3:1). It destroys the mass of confusion arising from fear and enables us to view today's events with a measure of detachment. When God resumes His dealings with Israel and one prophecy after another is then fulfilled, it will be impossible for the saints of that era to remain detached, but they will take comfort in realizing all this was foreknown to God ever since the beginning and that He is in full control.

Meanwhile "God gives us not a spirit of timidity but of power and of love and of sanity" (II Tim. 1:7); qualities so often found lacking in premature applications of Hebrew prophecy. For US the realization of Pauline prophecy draws nearer every day as we anticipate the "shout of command". To quote an ancient Eastern poet:

"The bird of Time has but a little way to fly;
And, Lo, the bird is on the wing".

Cecil J. Blay (Treasures of Truth, Instalment Five, June 1972)

BREAD OF HEAVEN

It is unfortunately true that those of our fellow believers who have been led astray by ultra-dispensationalism, based on the error of accepting Acts 28:28 as a "dispensational division" in Paul's ministry, do indeed qualify for the classical description of an expert as being "one who gradually learns more and more about less and less!"

That their particular theory long ago has been shown as untenable, because unscriptural, seems to be news that has never reached these friends, judging by the widespread adherence to this aberration indicated by the publications which reach me, and the sad thing is that by this attitude such people are depriving themselves of much valuable Scripture and thus of much vital truth.

It is probably true that many of us, in our developing search for truth, did at some time or another fall for this Acts 28,28 heresy, especially since it was (in his later years) endorsed by no less a leader than Dr. Bullinger. We are all prone to follow respected teachers!

One of the more serious by-products of this theory has been the teaching that the Lord's Supper (or Dinner) is a rite or ordinance for the Circumcision only, and therefore not applicable to the Church which is the body of Christ.

If we examine the facts as set out by the Apostle in First Corinthians 11 regarding this one and only celebration enjoined upon believers we shall see that Paul received a special revelation regarding it: — "For I accepted from the Lord what I give over also to you " (v. 23) and since when he wrote to the Corinthians he was separated from the other Apostles who had confined themselves to Israel, it is apparent that this observance is entirely in harmony with Paul's Evangel. Baptism was not. He thanked God that he had baptized only a few of the Corinthians, for he said he had not been commissioned to baptize (I Cor. 1:17), but the Lord's Supper was, indeed, to be observed "till He comes." It is not an ordinance, but a quite voluntary act which we are called upon to undertake for the deliberate, and salutary, recollection of our Lord's broken body and shed blood.

Those who shut themselves off from this observance shut themselves off, also, from a whole body of teaching regarding the Bread of Life. Paul's Epistles are a unit, but they are also part of a greater unit, the Holy Scriptures, and consequently cannot be regarded in isolation, any more than they can be carved up into sections. Among some it has become a fashion to avoid John's Gospel as if it did not concern us very much, especially since over-emphasis on this Gospel is almost a badge of traditional evangelism. Yet it is John who gives us the truths relating to the significance of the Bread, especially the Lord's declaration "I am the Bread of Life." Paul can be understood only if we first of all understand John—all Scripture is interlocked.

In all four Gospel descriptions of the Lord's Supper the Bread is spoken of first, and then, after supper, the wine. But Paul reverses the order! Literally, he writes, "The cup of the blessing, which we are blessing; is it not the fellowship of the blood of the Christ? The bread which we are breaking; is it not the fellowship of the body of the Christ? Seeing that one bread one body we, the many, are; for all of one bread are partaking" (Note I Cor. 10:16,17). The reason for the change seems to lie in the word ONE. The "one bread" is used to imply the "one body," whereas the cup implies no such unity. The cup and the bread are tokens of fellowship, but whereas the fellowship of the bread is linked with the "one body" very definitely indeed (v. 17) we who are partakers of the cup are not "one cup," neither are we "one blood."

Indeed, if we study the theme of Chapter Ten we shall find that Paul is discussing idol sacrifices and demons, and says "You cannot be drinking the Lord's cup and a cup of demons" (v. 21), so evidently it is drinking of the CUP that determines whether a person's communion is with the Lord or with demons. And from this we must draw the conclusion that the words wine, blood, cup and table can possess some sort of association with idols and demons, but that the bread and the body have no such direct connection.

In Paul's exposition in this chapter we notice that the words "eating," "sacrifice," and "altar" are to be found. The same word "eat" is used both of the true sacrifices enjoined upon Israel by the law and for the bread of the Lord's Supper, but this word is not used in the context of the references to demons, nor is any other word used for "eating," but only the word "drink". The Epistle to the Hebrews emphatically links BLOOD and SACRIFICES together, but Hebrews 10:1 sheds a very revealing light on the subject. So far as the sacrifice of animals is concerned, it is the BLOOD that matters, and this blood could only cover sins, it could not cancel them. But the sacrifice of Christ is not, actually in itself, regarded as of His blood—IT IS THE OFFERING OF THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST, once and for all. It is by the sacrifice of Him—that the blood of Christ has its efficacy, and the blood is not the whole of His sacrifice, but a part. The truth is that the sacrifice of Christ, in all its many aspects, is far too tremendous a thing to be divided off into various sections of thought for consideration by minds like our own. All we can do, and all this paper attempts to do, is to note carefully what Scripture says about some of these things, and to believe Scripture.

Consequently, if there can be, as Paul points out, a parody of the Lord's cup by partaking of the cup of demons, there cannot be any such parody of His sacrifice involved in the breaking of the bread. As we have seen, the cup represents fellowship in the blood of sacrifice, but the bread REPRESENTS FELLOWSHIP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST; of Himself, not only of His soul (which is what the blood represents). We do need care over these truths. Hebrews 10:10 speaks of the offering of "the body of Jesus Christ" and I Peter 2:24 says of Him "Who Himself bears our sins in His body on the tree." Apart from these two passages there are no references to His body except in the Gospels where they recount events of the Lord's Supper, and in Paul's Epistles, and what Paul teaches is so completely different as to belong to another world of thought, so we are compelled to keep Pauline doctrine regarding Christ's body completely isolated from all doctrine regarding Israel. And in view of this it seems probable that NO ONE AT ALL, apart from those who received Paul's Evangel, ever kept the Lord's Supper after the Ascension. True, the breaking of bread is recorded in Acts, but if that was the Lord's Supper it is strange that Luke never hints even at any ceremony, or refers to the cup or wine, His body or His blood, His death or His coming again. Indeed, the last reference (Acts 20) almost rules out anything like that.

And at this point it is most desirable that we should more fully consider John 6, and its references to bread. If we approach this chapter and see it AS IT IS, we should try and see the events recorded in it as the disciples saw them, without any preconceived ideas about the Lord's Supper. It begins with the Lord Jesus feeding a "vast throng" from a lad's five loaves and two fishes, which made an immense impression so that He had to avoid the crowd following Him, which involves His walking on the sea, but as they still follow Him round the lake, at their request He gives His great explanation on the theme of the bread. The climax of it is in the words: —

"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and they died. This is the Bread which is descending out of heaven; that anyone may eat of it and may not be dying. I am the bread, the living Bread, which is descending out of heaven. If anyone should eat of this Bread, he shall be living into the eon. Now the very Bread which I shall be giving is My flesh, which I shall be giving for the life of the world" (John 6:47-51).

The Jews took this literally, asking: "How can this one give us his flesh to eat?" To this the Lord replied: "Verily, verily, I am saying unto you; Except you should be eating the flesh of the Son of Mankind, and be drinking His blood, you are not having eonian life in yourselves."

Readers of the Concordant Version will observe that at verse 54 the Lord Jesus changes over to a different word, masticate, a word which has the meaning of deliberate effort and intention beyond the simple acceptance of bread; in short, the CHEWING of it. If we change the word to accord with the facts, verses 54-58 literally read something like this:

"He who is chewing the flesh of Me and drinking the blood of Me is having life eonian, and I shall be raising him up at the last day. For MY flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who is chewing the flesh of Me and drinking the blood of Me, even he will be living because of Me. This is the Bread which descends out of heaven. Not according as the fathers ate and died; he who is chewing this bread will be living for the eon."

This is a wonderful revelation, and one seldom discussed, and although it was spoken to "the throng" and "the Jews" there is nothing particularly "dispensational" about the Lord's words here. Its true meaning was hidden from those who would not believe (Matt. 13:10-17) and it is therefore given for those who did and who do believe Him. Primarily for Israel, as with all teaching in the Gospels, it is not EXCLUSIVELY for them, and has a meaning and purpose for us also, even though we are not in any way under covenant. Nothing in this passage is in any way associated with covenant or circumcision, any more than many other portions of Scripture loosely labelled "dispensational" by those who seem to be in bondage to that term. It is in fact the real basis of Paul's exposition of righteousness in Romans, chapters one to four, but that teaching was not set out by the Lord, nor could it have been at that time, remaining as a basic truth ripe for development when Paul was called to his special ministry. We will admit that it was dispensational in the sense that it could not be developed until the time came to establish the Evangel for the uncircumcision entrusted to Paul. Righteousness out of faith was never dispensational.

The words from John are very clear, and they are obviously not literal, as the unbelieving Jews took them to be. The idea itself is quite revolting. We are told that the Lord Jesus is Himself the Bread of eonian life, that this very bread is His flesh, and He gave it for "the sake of the life of the world." He added that "Except you should be eating the flesh of the Son of Mankind, and be drinking His blood, you are not having eonian life in yourselves," and that this flesh has to be "masticated;" that is, eaten purposefully and deliberately. His flesh and blood are true food and drink, and those who masticate His flesh and drink His blood are having eonian life.

He left it to spiritual intelligence to interpret this but, even so, only a few of His disciples understood, wherefore He explained more clearly: "Is this snaring you? The spirit is that which is vivifying the flesh is benefiting nothing! the declarations which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." This statement must be taken as true of ALL His declarations, and includes declarations made later by the Holy Spirit. They mean that the believer has, by a deliberate and conscious personal act, in spirit, to take His Life to himself, and there the matter stood for the time being, but first His flesh had to be given up in His broken body and His blood poured out; after that, these declarations in John 6 could become practical experience.

It was after that time that the Lord's Supper was revealed; so, John's words, although related to it, cannot possibly be a reference to it. But the Lord's Supper may well be a reference to this discourse on the Bread of Life. It has been suggested by some that the passage in John 6 was intended to serve instead of any reference by that writer to the actual institution of the Lord's Supper; for John gives no facts concerning it, but merely refers to it before and after his account of the washing of the feet of the disciples. But if we put together the four Gospel accounts of the Supper, we see running through them all an awareness of the

coming betrayal. The sequence of events is linked by Luke in this manner: "And they begin to discuss among themselves which of them it may be who is about to commit this thing. Now there came to be a rivalry among them, which of them is seeming to be the greater" (Luke 22: 23-24). At this point John (in 13:18) quotes our Lord as saying: "He who is masticating bread with Me lifts up his heel against Me," which is a quotation from Psalm 41:9. Judas was not chewing the Bread which descends out of heaven. On the contrary, he was chewing ordinary bread, and at the same time making ready to betray the Lord, so that His flesh should be put to death and His blood poured out.

So, it is plain that the Lord's discourse on the true Bread has its fulfilment in what took place AFTER the Lord's Supper, and which continues to take place. It is in a way prophetic of the results that the coming terrible betrayal and tragedy would bring in their wake; of their effect on God's people, and ultimately upon the whole world. It becomes clear that the Lord's Supper and its institution had a threefold objective: firstly, to be a constant reminder of His broken body; secondly, it was the announcing or showing forth of His death till He should come; and thirdly, it was to keep in remembrance the future New Covenant, not yet brought into being; which, when it is, will be the foretaste on earth of that life which God ultimately intends for the whole world. And John 6 gives us insight into the SPIRITUAL realities, and the heavenly realities as well, which underlie these things, for no less than SEVEN times John tells us, in reporting the Lord's words, that the true Bread "cometh down out of heaven."

Paul tells us (in I Cor. 15:44) that in resurrection we shall have spiritual bodies, and (to quote Andrew Jukes) "To support this new and heavenly life we need the selfsame substance as that which formed and sustained the Lord, when in Himself He formed the 'new covenant' for us. Thank God, as the babe in nature takes in its mother's flesh and blood, and grows thereby, without in the least knowing or understanding either what it takes in or how this nourishment is communicated, so it is with us who are quickened with Christ's life and born of Him. We live by Him while, yet we understand little or nothing of that on which we live, or how we are sustained by it. But it is Christ's flesh that feeds and supports us; it is something of His very nature that we take in, through a real receiving and appropriating of His substance. This flesh or substance is distinctively the 'flesh of the Son of Man' It speaks of man according to God's mind as He came forth from God, before that division entered which is met and overcome by the glories pledged both to the Woman's and to Abraham's Seed This and nothing less is the flesh He gives, that so eating this flesh we may build up again in the undivided image of the Son of Man."

And in all these considerations it is as though we were viewing, from some tremendous and Divine altitude, the inimitable sweep of God's purpose in the betrayal and death and resurrection of our sublime Lord Jesus Christ. So wide is the scope of this purpose that it is absolutely impossible for it to be constrained and confined within the usually accepted "dispensational" theory. No part of these truths belongs to Israel EXCLUSIVELY; none of them can be restricted to so-called "kingdom truth" or confined to one "economy." The Bread of Life, and the truth inherent in this title, is for ALL God's people, both now and for all future time, until in the consummation of His purpose life has come to the whole world of mankind. So great is our God!

And with this thought we should bow in reverence before the great Mystery of God's purpose for this universe. A mystery which utilizes human and Satanic treachery in its accomplishment; a mystery which we can never understand fully while in this earthly life.

One often comes across keen students of Scripture who seem to think that with sufficient application we should be able to dot every "i" and cross every "t" in a full and complete understanding of the deep things of God. It never has been my own experience that we can do so. Here and there in the Scriptures we are granted glimpses into matters too deep for our present mortal understanding, and some spiritual

experiences are not of a nature that can be expressed in words. If we cannot understand the reasons, we can at least begin to see the consequences for Himself, deliberately chosen as they were when God created this world and peopled it with creatures who were enabled to rebel against Him. The poet of long ago expressed what should be our feelings in these words: —

"Bread of the world, in mercy broken,
Wine of the soul in mercy shed,
By Whom the words of life were spoken,
And in Whose death our sins are dead.
Look on the heart by sorrow broken,
Look on the tears by sinners shed;
And be Thy feast to us a token
That by Thy grace our souls are fed."

Cecil J. Blay (Treasures of Truth, Instalment Seventeen, May-June 1975)

DOOM AND DESTINY

At a time when the thoughts of men are directed towards the exploration of the realms of Space, despite all the insoluble problems that face them upon earth, it is no doubt appropriate that those who believe God should accept what His Word declares about this earth, which He created for man, about which we really know so little.

The earth on which we live is a fascinating mystery only properly explained by reference to Scripture, and a distinction should be drawn between what Scripture teaches about the earth, the planet on which we live, and the world, which in the language of inspiration speaks of the system of human life, the world-order. The differences are important, especially since the term "world" is frequently a mistranslation in the popular versions for the word "eon" or age.

The basic teaching of Scripture devolves upon the antithesis between two men; the first man, Adam, created by God, and the Second Man, the Last Adam, the only begotten Son of God. Adam and Christ are the two men of destiny, the first bringing death to all humanity while the Second eventually brings life to all, for to quote the precious and familiar words of the first Corinthian letter, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive".

One of the peculiarities of religious thinking is the notion that humanity exists in the middle layer of a kind of three-layer cake, with a fiery pit underneath us popularly (or unpopularly) known as Hell, and a spirit world somewhere above us known as Heaven, to which we may go when we die (if we are good) where we may play harps and walk on golden streets, without hands to play with or feet to walk with; indeed, without bodies at all, just something known as "souls".

Scripture knows nothing about all this. Peter tells us that the planet earth is stored with fire, and many times we are told that heaven (the celestials) i.e. the abode of God, and our Lord told the Jews that no man had ascended into heaven.

It is wonderfully true that the Apostle Paul was Given the revelation that those who comprise the church which is the body of Christ have a celestial destiny, compared with the earthly destiny of Israel, the chosen people, to whom the promises of a future earthly kingdom were made. He tells us that when the trumpet sounds we shall be changed, as we would have to be were we to live in the celestials, and that then we shall ever be with the Lord, but apart from the Pauline revelation **ALL THE REST OF SCRIPTURE DEALS WITH THIS EARTH**, with mankind and the creatures who live upon it. Even the remarkable book of Revelation, with its visions of heaven, relates all these to earthly happenings.

The title of this paper may appear to be melodramatic, but it is not intended to be. There always has been far too much melodrama connected with the exposition of Scripture, both written and verbal, but the true drama of the Word is so great as to have no need of man's histrionics. It is sober truth that man and his earth are under the doom of a curse, and equally sober truth that a glorious destiny awaits them both. The Apostle Paul in a passage which seems strangely neglected (Romans 8: 19-22) sets the position out quite plainly:

"For the earnest expectation of the Creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creation itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now ..."

Paul is not here discussing the future of the human race; in other passages, notably his closely reasoned argument which takes up the whole of Romans 5, he has shown beyond dispute that through the death of Christ it will eventuate that the free gift "came upon all men for justification of life". What Paul is telling his readers in the passage quoted here is the tremendous effect that the Manifestation of the sons of God will have upon the whole of God's creation.

One of our readers, writing as a layman observer, acknowledges "with gratitude that God has given us groups of gifted people who were not and will not be found only within a certain denomination or a certain school of theology, and that God is still giving evangelists, pastors and teachers unto the end that we should all attain to the unity of the faith and of the realization of the sons of God, to a mature man".

One such gifted person was the late G. L. Rogers, whose studies in Romans were of a quality that seldom has been equaled, and he was by no means neglectful of the passage we have quoted. Acknowledgements are due to him for many of the thoughts put forward in the present article.

Man, being man, is naturally selfish, while God, being God, is mindful of all the creatures of His hand. What Paul is saying in Romans 8 is an explanation of the permanent relationship that always has existed between man and the rest of God's creation. It is the relationship between man and his lost estate, for it was through Adam's sin that the whole earth came under a curse. And it is part of Paul's evangel that the victory of our Lord at Calvary brings to man not only personal salvation, but the salvation of man's lost estate also.

We also groan, says the Apostle, and one of the reasons for our distress is that we live in a creation subject to "vanity and bondage". Knowing as we do that God is love, we must be often puzzled by the terrible things that happen on earth, but we should remember that in the presence of Christ in coming days things will be very different. He is the true Heir, for Scripture tells us that this universe was created FOR HIM, so His creation groans and travails until He shall return and lift the curse which oppresses it. The work of God's hands is beloved, and He will deliver it—all of it—just as all mankind comes eventually within the scope of His jurisdiction.

In this passage from Romans 8 Paul personifies creation (or as much of it as was placed under man's authority) and ascribes to it an experience similar to a human one. In the beginning we are told that God described His creation as "very good", and it was therefore entirely suited to the sinless character of Adam, its first lord. He was given authority to subdue the earth and exercise dominion over all other creatures, and this authority constituted Adam as its Head, the earth being his inheritance, his estate, to which he was bound by unbreakable links. Adam was "of the earth", he was part of it, and it shared his gain or loss, his fortunes and his destiny. To quote G. L. Rogers, "Man is a microcosm, a little world in himself. He has the breath of God in his nostrils; he has a soul which links him with all other animals; and he originates from the soil on which he walks and to which his body eventually returns". Man is composed of earth's chemical elements, and his components are estimated at current chemical values as being worth a little more than three dollars.

Christ, the Last Adam, is also the head of creation, which is His inheritance. He is described in Hebrews as the One Who laid the foundation of the earth, and Who has been appointed "Heir of all things"• He is

bound to His inheritance in the same way as Adam was, and as it shared in Adam's tragedy, so will it share in Christ's triumph. We are told that some of the early fathers called Christ the DESMOS, the bond or tie, for He is the life of all that lives, the Sustainer of all things.

We are well aware also that the fate of all humanity rested upon Adam's obedience or disobedience in Eden, for he held it in his hands. We are not so clear as to the fact that he held the fate of creation as well, but if he who was lord of creation should suffer and die the inheritance to which he was indissolubly linked would inevitably share his fate. Equally, if the first Adam and his descendants are doomed to disappear and give place to the Second Man and the new humanity of which He speaks, then the old creation, linked to Adam its head, must pass away and give place to a new creation, linked to Christ its Head.

We who live as to the flesh in the old creation, enjoy many blessings, and the whole earth will enjoy much more when Christ returns to it. These spring from the grace of God, and are in fulfilment of the covenants He has made with man, but over all these the ultimate goal of God is a new creation, though all of its members will recognize their former state in the present old creation.

Paul explains why creation is now so far below its original state when it was said to be "very good"—namely, because when the death sentence was passed upon Adam, creation was "subjected to vanity", whereto he himself had been subjected. "Vanity" in this context is a translation of MATAIOTES which does not bear the current meaning of vanity but rather resultlessness, failure, frustration. The fact is that the creation does not result in the beauty and good for which God designed in everything is disappointing, nothing produces perfect results. It is, of course, an entirely suitable environment for man in his sinful state. Nothing is allowed to become permanent, for God will not accept permanent imperfection. All our flowers wither; winter ruins promises of spring before summer can fulfil them; youth's beauty fades—and if we can feel satisfied with this we cannot have any idea of the ideal creation which God intends.

The book of Ecclesiastes uses this word "vanity" over and over again and, in effect, so do men of today when they query whether life is worth living. Some may say that "all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds", but God does not; He says to man and to creation that they are vanity, resultless, and that all their actions and experience relentlessly proclaim the fact of sin and its universal presence. This underlines the further fact that this universe is governed by moral law, and the violation of God's law inevitably brings cosmic disaster. God makes man and nature constantly declare their unsatisfactory nature, and consequently, their impermanence.

Paul says that creation was Subjected to vanity "not voluntarily". That is to say, this vanity is contrary to natural law, which is self-renovating. This is clear when we remember that God said to Adam "Cursed be the ground"; in other words, Adam's sin bears the blame, so the works of God describe the words of God, and sin is shown for the destructive force it is. God makes creation to constantly declare its impermanence because He is not satisfied with things as they are.

Is there then no relationship between catastrophe and judgement? An earlier superior creation has vanished, and what we witness is not a very satisfactory "evolutionary progress" but degeneration.

The first man was placed in a world which was in every way suited to his innocent humanity, and when this man brought evil on himself he brought it upon his entire environment also, although his lordship remained, and he still dominated the creation that he marred, "and has carried out the command to fill the earth and subdue it to a very considerable extent. He has explored it almost entirely, and has navigated both sea and air; in fact, creation regards man as its master and responds to his masterful touch. The soil responds to his cultivation; plant life has been developed into new and better forms; wild fruits have been

developed into appetizing foods. Man's engineering has invented machinery which harnesses the powers of nature; he builds dams and converts deserts into fruitful land. Yet everywhere he finds his limitations and none of his ambitious schemes are able to overcome the vanity to which he and creation are doomed.

But God does not doom man hopelessly or needlessly, for Paul says that the creation has been subjected to vanity "in expectation". All mankind has an instinctive presentiment of a "golden age" to come, and when we think of this we groan, as the whole of creation groans, in protest against its unwilling bondage. And when we read the Scripture further we find that "the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God". Nothing could be clearer; here is a statement that not only mankind but creation itself also is bound up with the Second Adam's future glory as it is now bound up with the first Adam's past sin.

A letter from a reader has raised a query regarding the poem published in our first Instalment, which speaks of our Lord among the animals, and wonders if it is true that all soulish creatures are included with Adam. Undoubtedly, they are, as this present Scripture explains, and it is man's shame and sorrow that human sin has also spread its corruption into both the animal and vegetable worlds. Cancerous growths are found on trees, and weeds are probably degenerate plants. The universal degeneracy is seen in the pernicious forms of animal and vegetable life constantly at war against other forms, while we are afflicted with destructive germs and poisonous insects which doubtless were once of a harmless and friendly nature.

Animals not only suffer at the hands of men, but they also prey upon one another and terrorize one another on earth, in the sea and in the air, while man has to defend himself against them as though they sought vengeance upon their sinful master. Are we not often puzzled as to why the spirit of hatred and destruction is as manifest among the beasts as it is among men, although man is more beastly than any beast?

Consider the slaughter of animals in the divine offerings of Israel's temple worship, ordained by the God Who does not delight in the blood of bulls or goats. No innocent animal suffers pain or death without the awareness of God; all their sinless suffering speaks of the agony of God in the presence of His creatures' sin. If we see in God's requirement of sacrifices only a disregard of animal life, we are missing the point entirely. What we should see is the unity of mankind with creation, pointing to the Second Man and His sacrifice. All life is precious to God, and the death of one of His creatures is His sacrifice as well as man's, for He has more than a Creator's rights toward them—He has the rights of love.

We should not be amazed at earthly calamities, for earth is under a curse. This is why hurricanes and cyclones; earthquakes and tidal waves bring wreckage and death upon land and sea; why its deserts scorch man to death and bury him in sandstorms and kill him with thirst. All these things have been instanced as evidences that the earth has been badly made, but this is not so, for creation is now as abnormal as man in vanity.

Irrespective of all present vanity or resultlessness, we should also see an order and a system which denotes a power great enough to rectify all the disorder and turn the uselessness into usefulness. This power is present even now and brings blessings to man. As Paul says in Acts 14 and Romans 1, this is the work of the living God, Who gives to men food and gladness. No, creation at present is by no means perfect, but on the other hand, it is perfectly suited to God's present dealings with man.

Science agrees that there is an essential unity in all creation, for it was not only made subject to vanity when Adam fell but it suffers in man's other crises also. Man was destroyed by the flood but, as we are

told, "all flesh ceased to breathe that moved on the earth; of birds, of tame beasts and of wild beasts, and all the swarming things that swarm upon the earth".

It is to be remembered that the plagues of Egypt affected life in the waters and in the animal world as well as men; and the land of Israel, we read, was blest or despoiled according as the Israelites were obedient or disobedient. Indeed, at the greatest crisis in human history—the murder of the Son of God—the earth itself shuddered with horror, even as Matthew declares:

"And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent •••• and when the centurion and those that were with him saw the earthquake and the things that were done they feared greatly, saying, Truly, this was the Son of God".

Turning to the Revelation, we read that future judgements will fall upon land and sea, the rivers and the sun; and as the progress of the man of sin is recorded, it is marked by increasing severity in the many plagues, the climax being a great earthquake that will shake not only the earth but heaven also until, finally, from the presence of Him Who sits on the great white throne earth and heaven will flee; this sin-infested creation will pass away; purging fire will transform it; and from the ashes will emerge a new, perfect, permanent creation. This is figured now in those of us who believe, for in spirit we become a new creation in Christ Jesus, our old humanity discarded and forgotten.

And what are those words John was told to write as "faithful and true"? make all things new!

That is why we look, ultimately, for a new earth any a new heaven in which righteousness will dwell, just as we anticipate the realization of a new humanity, for the ties which bind the first Adam and the Last Adam to that estate over which God made them lords are unbreakable.

Paul says that creation itself shall enter into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God, but this ultimate goal will be reached only after ages of time, for all God's prophecies regarding the restoration of Israel, the resurrection of the patriarchs and the reign of David must be fulfilled first, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Creation tasted the powers of the future when it recognized the Lordship of the Son of Man, and responded to His will in signs and miracles. Even the winds and the sea obeyed Him! These were samples of His power to release creation from vanity and bring it into freedom. Miracles were simply the restoration of the abnormal to what is normal.

The first man made creation the slave of corruption, but the second Man will subject all to Himself, that all may be subject to God, and this final subjection will bring to creation its highest blessing. Corruption must go for death can have no permanent place in this universe; in fact, we are told that it is the last enemy to destroyed. Then the process of dying will have ceased, but death itself will be destroyed and will no longer hold anything within its grasp. This will result in a perfected humanity in a perfected creation, in which God Himself will dwell with mankind. This is the ultimate reconciliation secured by the Blood of the Cross.

Creation cannot be liberated by evangelism, nor can the heralding of the Word remove the curse from the earth. Our holiness will not preserve us from pain and death, nor will our personal devotion heal the waters of the Dead Sea, nor will our spirituality tame wild beasts. Prayer will not cast Satan into the abyss, nor will peace conferences prevent birds and beasts from killing one another. But all these things quite literally will take place under the new heaven and on the new earth.

The Last Adam is humanity's Kinsman, and He will do for all creation what the kinsman-redeemer did in Israel; buy back not only the kinsman but also his estate.

Paul says that we who are saved now in grace are groaning also as we await the advent of glory. "We are aware", he says, "that the entire creation is groaning and travailing together until now". Who then are the "we"? Only those who believe God's Word, which the majority do not believe. All creation's cries and sounds are in the minor key; the voices of animals, the winds and the sea have an undertone of lament. But remember that travail is the prelude to birth, and creation's many pains are labor pains; upon delivery the pains will be forgotten because of joy.

Do you, the reader, regard this interpretation as foolishly literal? Do you suppose God would ever yield to lose any part of His precious creation, or let sin leave some permanent stain thereon? All creation is the handiwork of God, and Christ is the Tie that bonds this; creation together as one indissoluble unit. We are told that "all is for Him", so any loss would be His own, for He is the Heir of all things; Lord of all creation which He has redeemed and will yet exalt to a future estate excelling its former pristine glory.

Failing to recognize all this, some would have to boldly ignore these immortal words of the Apostle Paul from Colossians One, the most sublime of all tributes to God's dear Son:

"In Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, ••• whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers; all things were created through Him and for Him, and He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together •••. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell. 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".

In surveying this complete and universal triumph of the Cross, Paul includes the earth as well as the heavens, the entire groaning creation to be freed from the slavery of corruption and share the glorious freedom of the children of God when Christ "makes all things new". As Head of a new humanity He is also called "the Son of Man" most appropriate to His intimate earthly kinship, and subject of these words in Psalm 8:

"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet"•

The prophets never lost sight of this truth. Abraham and Isaac looked forward to a new creation upon this earth, a city whose builder and maker is God. The new Jerusalem is not a heavenly place as we are often mistakenly—told; rather it "descends out of heaven" TO THE EARTH as the earth becomes heavenly in character under the rule of the Second Man, Who is out of heaven. This redeemed earth as their future home is God's inviolate promise to saints of old when they will be resurrected and glorified, for they died not having received that promise.

The heavenly destiny of the church as the body of Christ had been a secret quite exceptional, first revealed only to Paul. The "Last Adam" must be both the Lord of heaven and Lord of earth. Under the Headship of Christ, the members of His body are destined to participate in that future administration whereby all in the heavens also are put under His feet. Our POLITEUMA or "citizenship", according to Paul, "is in heaven". The word really means "homeland", out of which we await our Savior Who comes from our homeland to call us home. Are we, like the Corinthians, unmindful of this? "Do you not know", Paul reminds them, "that we are to judge angels" (messengers)? It seems that they, like many yet today, were strangely unaware of this.

Beyond that expectation of the church, God has many other promises He will yet fulfil. A vast area of land was promised to Abraham which he has not yet received. After Daniel foresaw a remote future time when the God of heaven will set up an age-abiding kingdom, he was told simply to rest, not knowing how long, but he was promised also to stand in his lot at the end of those days whereof he had prophesied. There still remains God's promise to David that One out of his loins shall sit upon his throne, a promise David's greater Son will most assuredly enjoy.

For all who died in faith, and ultimately all humanity, the whole groaning creation, the day will come when the promises of God in Christ Jesus are found to be "Yea" and "Amen". The glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Then when the sons of God are revealed, all creation will enjoy deliverance from bondage to present corruption, entering the glorious liberty of the children of God. Then the kingdom of heaven will have come, when the will Of God be done on earth as it is in heaven!

Cecil J Blay (Treasures of Truth, Instalment Three, December 1971)

GIANTS IN THE LAND

From Mobile Alabama, U. S.A., we receive at times a leaflet called *Plainer Words* by a Mr. Tom Ballinger, much of whose teaching is sound, although he adheres to the theory of separating the intent of Paul's prison epistles from those written earlier. As many of our readers are aware, that is a frequent misunderstanding of Acts 28:28, part of Paul's address to Jews at Rome, which has been misconstrued as if it was only then that the salvation of God would be sent to the Gentiles. Consequently, that point of time has been mistaken by some as the beginning of a new "dispensation". We realize that Paul there instead was only quoting what had happened to the "fathers" of that generation a long time before. It is not a valid reason for denying the unity and continuity of all Paul's epistles as a whole, even though they do constitute a progressive revelation from the earlier to the latter.

On a different subject, however, Mr. Ballinger has written a paper called "The Sons of God in Genesis 6" containing some very useful observations which we gladly commend to our readers. The textual basis for this appears in Gen. 6:1-6 which reads as follows:

"And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose ... There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them; the same became mighty men of old, men of renown. And God saw that the wickedness of men was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart."

Mr. Ballinger very rightly disputes a widely accepted yet mistaken interpretation of this passage as if it means that those called "Sons of God" were the sons of Seth, and as if the incident recorded concerns the breakdown of a previously preserved separation between the godly line of Seth and the godless line of Cain, which we agree is NOT Scriptural. He defines the meaning of "sons of God" which he reminds us is a term set in contrast to "the daughters of men", but if the "sons of God" had been really sons of Seth there would have been no contrast, for "the daughters of men" included also daughters of Seth, and we are nowhere told that the sons of Cain saw the daughters of Seth "that they were fair". It is only natural that the sons of men are attracted to the daughters of men. What we are told here in Genesis is quite different; that the sons of God as one kind of beings were attracted to the daughters of men from a separate kind of beings. The sons of God did something NOT natural in taking the daughters of men as their wives and the progeny of that misalliance became giants, resulting in great wickedness on earth, so that God was grieved at His heart.

"Sons of God" are mentioned elsewhere in Scripture, notably in Job: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them". This is unmistakable, because when God asked Satan from whence he had come to appear in His presence, Satan replied; "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it" (1:7).

Thus far at least, no sons of men have ever appeared in the presence of God, but the fact that sons of God had existed before Adam is well attested in Job 38.4,7. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" Since those sons of God had preceded the creation of man, it is evident they had to represent a supernatural pre-Adamic race which is further remindful of a passage in Psalm 89:6:

"For who in heaven can be compared to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?"

There again the "sons of the mighty" are set in contrast to "the assembly of the saints" and those of the heavens are invariably characterized as males; never mentioned by the feminine or neuter gender. This is also consistent with our Lord's words where He said that in the resurrection humans will be "as the messengers", all of them male, neither marrying nor giving in marriage.

To quote further from Mr. Ballinger's words: "The angels who appeared to Abraham in Gen. 18:1, 2, 22 are angels but are called 'three men'. They look like men, they talk as men, they are called men, they are mistaken for men, but they are angels". Likewise, the angels who visited Lot according to Genesis 19 were mistaken for men; so also, was the angel of the Lord who appeared to Manoah and his wife in Judges 13 when he was interchangeably called "a man of God", "the man", or "the angel of the Lord". Manoah even asked: "Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman?" to which the angel replied "I am".

From these examples of Scripture Mr. Ballinger concludes also (and we agree) that angels or messengers cannot be sexless as alleged in certain Hebrew and Christian interpretations, for that would be denying clear statements in the Word of God. They are always, without exception, identified as males, and no others could have been "the sons of God" in Genesis 6.

Jude likewise refers to "angels that kept not their first estate" ("their first habitation"—CLNT) and Peter recognizes these as "the spirits ...once stubborn when the patience of God awaited in the days of Noah" (I Pet. 3:19-20). Both these passages clearly relate to the same "sons of God" who took wives from daughters of men when they as heavenly messengers had been transformed to bodies of flesh and blood, going after "strange flesh" as Jude says further. The offspring of this unnatural union became superhuman—"mighty men of old, men of renown" who might well have been the "gods" of ancient mythology. All this coincides with the utter corruption of humans culminating in the days of Noah where we are told of man that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually ... The earth also was corrupt before God and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:5, 11). Mr. Ballinger suggests also that this contamination of humanity was one of Satan's attempts to prevent the arrival of the woman's promised "Seed" (Gen. 3:15). It is quite evident that if the whole human race had been destroyed from that contaminated state, it would have averted the doom of the Adversary by the Seed of the woman. It is therefore most significant, at the time of the Flood, that Noah was called "perfect in his generations", indicating that only he and his family were acceptable for being preserved alive, wherefore he was told to build the ark so that all human flesh would not be destroyed.

Before we leave this subject for now, it is well to observe that apparently there were further hybridizations of angels and humans even after the Flood. Where we are told in Genesis 6:4 that "there were giants in the earth in those days"—before the Flood—we find these significant further words: "and also after that". This accords with other passages which indicate there was some subsequent attempt to corrupt the race. First after Abram was called of God, no doubt Satan observed that this was the line of descent through which the promised Seed would appear. Consequently, when Abram had entered Canaan, we are told coincidentally that "the Canaanite was then in the land" (Gen. 12:6). Much similar words appear also in Gen. 13:7.

This appears to explain a matter which has frequently troubled very many; just why God should have told the Israelites to utterly destroy the inhabitants of the lands they conquered and occupied. Assuming that the people of those areas were the descendants of an unnatural union between celestial messengers and earthly females long after the Flood, as suggested also by that appended phrase—"and also after that"—then it is not strange that God should have commanded Israel to exterminate all without exception. As Mr. Ballinger further indicates, it is quite apparent that some of them had escaped destruction until well after Israel had occupied much of Canaan. Thus, when the twelve spies were sent out in advance to explore the land, they came back with great and real fear—not necessarily cowardice—when they reported what

formidable giants they had seen in the land: "And we saw the giants": they said, "the sons of Anak, which come of the giants, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight" (Num. 13:33). There is also much cause to believe that the last survivor of that hybrid evil race was Goliath of Gath, slain by David, type of the greater David, the coming Seed of the woman.

It is most conceivable that there will be still a future and similar corruption of the race as though earth were to be visited by "men from outer space". This would accord with our Lord's prophecy of the time when His return to earth will be impending. "As it was in the days of Noah," He said, "so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man". Likewise, in the parable of the Wheat and Tares He associated "the children of the wicked one" with the sower of false seed. Mr. Ballinger concludes most appropriately, "The Bible is the most radical book in print ...not so hard to understand as it is to believe".

Cecil J. Blay (Treasures of Truth, Instalment Eight, February-March 1973)

"I AND MY FATHER ARE ONE"

False as we know the religious doctrine of the Trinity to be, and directly contradictory to the Scripture statement, "Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God is One," yet it still remains a great difficulty with many sincere believers to apprehend HOW it is that God is One. It seems only natural, on the surface, that many should regard the Father and the Son as two distinct and separate individuals. This is where our choice of words has to be made with some care, for while Scripture certainly shows that Father and Son are Two, for us to declare them two PERSONS creates insuperable difficulties and would certainly invalidate the truth of the unity of Deity.

We have only to examine the Hebrew Scriptures to see even there a certain two-ness in God. He is shown as so glorious that no one could look on Him and live, as was made clear at Sinai by the excessive precautions taken to avoid any Israelite approaching the Mount too closely. He could not be looked upon any more than Paul could look upon the glory of the One Who met him on the Damascus road. But in the same Hebrew Scriptures we are shown His appearing in ordinary human form, talking and eating with men, who were in no way adversely affected. Right at the beginning He appeared to Adam and Eve who heard the sound of Him walking about in the Garden, and hid themselves, not from the voice they heard but "from the presence of Jehovah Elohim." He would have been visible, not merely a voice from the sky; the same being to whom, we are told, Abraham and Moses talked "face to face."

Yet Stephen declared that "the God of the glory was seen by our father Abraham" (Acts 7:2). So, He Who customarily dwelt in unapproachable glory must have condescended to appear to Abraham in lowly human form. But it is extremely doubtful if from these admitted facts anyone would be foolish enough to reason that the Hebrew Scriptures revealed two "Persons," One visible and One invisible. The obvious truth is that visibility and invisibility were two aspects of God, and that He assumed either characteristic at such times as one or the other was the most suited to His immediate purpose. This, of course, is what all true Hebrews believed; they did not argue about the existence of God, for from Genesis onwards their Scriptures had taken God for granted, and in addition their tradition taught that God had spoken to Adam and Eve, face to face. It is understandable that none of the great Hebrew writers of Scripture made any attempt to discriminate between two Gods, one visible and the other invisible, nor is there in all of their writings the slightest hint that these aspects of God indicated "Two Persons."

Possibly the best illustration of the same duality of the divine aspect can be seen in the Greek Scriptures following our Lord's resurrection (Luke 24:31) where we are told that when the disciples recognized Him, He disappeared from them. Literally, it says that He became unapparent to them; in other words, became invisible. This He was able to do because He no longer suffered the restrictions of a human body and possessed all authority in heaven and on earth. This would seem to be a very similar situation to that of God visible and invisible as portrayed in the Hebrew Scriptures. And if those ancient Hebrews could readily understand that God was both transcendent and unapproachable, yet also immanent and visible, why cannot we accept that relationship ourselves, as shown in the fact of God being Father and Son?

One of our inescapable beliefs is that God is One, hence our rejection of the pantheistic doctrine of the Trinity, so completely unscriptural, but this belief does no violence to the suggestion we have made regarding the two-sided aspect of our God shown to us in His Word. The late Alexander Thomson once drew attention to that certain strange verse in Genesis 19:24 where we read: —

"That the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah
brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven."

He asked, Why is the Lord mentioned twice? Are there here two Jehovahs? According to the primitive Hebrew text, in verse 18 Lot is standing before Jehovah, pleading for safety, and when he and his wife and daughters are safe in Zoar, we read: —

"And JEHOVAH causes it to rain upon Sodom and Gomorrah
Sulphur and fire from-beside Jehovah in the heavens."

The narrative is quite clear. On the one hand, there is an earthly conversation between Jehovah and Lot: on the other hand, there is a heavenly Jehovah causing fire to fall upon the earth. The visible Jehovah must always have been our Lord, Who plainly declared that "Before Abraham was, I AM."

Though we insist on taking our Lord's words here at their face value—"I and My Father are one"—we realize there are those who object. They point to our Lord's agonizing prayer in Gethsemane: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt." This, they say, indicates differences of intention between two "different personalities." It does not. The Greek "*thelō*" as used there signifies *wish* or *desire*; not the act of INTENTION which would have required the Greek verb *boulamai*. As a true and real Man our Lord most certainly would not have WISHED or DESIRED to undergo His then approaching ordeal (and He was indeed most certainly human.)

Our suggestion that there is a degree of duality in God should enable our readers even better to understand the crisis in Gethsemane and the intense conflict which must have been raging within the heart of God. We must always remember that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and He must have suffered incredibly more than any human ever would or could. He must have been torn by an agony of mind entirely beyond our comprehension. And even at our much lower mortal level most of us have known what it is to be agonized in a mental struggle which seems to pull us both ways at once.

We make a great mistake in imagining God as operating in an emotionless vacuum, and as a consequence of our mistaken belief we can easily forget the immense COST of the Cross to God. The values involved at Calvary are humanly incalculable; spiritually, emotionally and in every other imaginable way. It is impossible to think that the all-time mightiest event in universal history, the Atonement, could have been accomplished by the invisible spirit Who is God only with the aid of one specially selected human being. The human being had to be One Who was derived directly from Holy Spirit; in short, only GOD *Himself* could have settled the question of Sin; and no one could possibly have helped Him; certainly, no outsider. Christ was no outsider in any sense; He is and was the exact embodiment of God's reality.

Our dictionaries tell us that a Deist is one who believes in a personal God revealed in nature, but denies any possibility of a personal revelation. On the other hand, the God of the Scriptures insists on a personal revelation of Himself, and our Lord is that revelation. Do we, often enough, stop to realize that, apart from Christ, we cannot see God anywhere, nor can we have the slightest comprehension of Him?

Those who try to see God ANYWHERE other than in Christ lose God altogether: and in fact, they lower their esteem of His Son to the same degree by which they seek to see God elsewhere. We speak of the believer's Contemplation of Christ, something which we should always endeavor to fix our minds upon, for only by contemplating Him shall we come into any personal discovery of God. It has been well said that "You will never find God by looking behind the shoulders of His Son, or trying to climb around the Son so as to approach the Father."

The well-known Scripture tells us that "God is Spirit," and as such He is not a "Person" in the way humans understand that word; despite the trinitarian follies of the creeds. If we go, as we should, to Scripture for a definition or explanation of what is meant by Spirit we shall find that the word is used to

express "invisible power." The invisible, intangible power of all life, action and intelligence, as A. E. Knoch defined it long ago. It is well known that the Hebrew word RUACH is used both for "spirit" and for "wind," so that when they thought of spirit they also thought of a mighty wind. Our Lord also said, "the wind bloweth where it listeth. . .so is everyone that is born of the Spirit."

It is not necessary to ask the readers of this magazine whether they wish to find the "Person" of God, or His personality, for the very fact they are readers is the evidence of that express desire, but there is a need for the warning that, in this search, none of us has any right at all to look for Another behind or above the Son of God. He, Himself, is the Object of our search, and we shall not find God anywhere else other than by looking into the face of His Son. This truth has been described as a very simple theology. Indeed, it is, and it could not be simpler, but it is in accord with Scripture and not only satisfies and delights the believer; it honors the Son.

Jehovah means "God in manifestation," so God becomes personal to us only in His Son. Without such manifestation He remains Invisible Spirit, though not "*a* Spirit" as the A. V. incorrectly has it. The presence of the indefinite article, not found there in the Greek, would localize God. He is not *A* Spirit; He *is* Spirit, literally "God Spirit is."

It is extremely difficult for the human mind to comprehend God as Spirit; invisible, intangible, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent; and all other superlatives which are His alone; we have difficulty in avoiding the error of thinking of Him as Another "Person," behind Christ, and somehow senior to Him. But He is not Another.

No doubt the general impression in Christendom is that the right description for the Apostle Paul would be that of The Great Missionary, and to some degree that is true, for so his position as Gentiles' Apostle demanded; but we know that Paul's efficacy extended to far greater heights than his unequalled evangelism, and this writer always thinks of Paul as The Great Explainer. So much Scripture would be unintelligible to us were it not for his elucidation, and so this matter of the Father and the Son is made perfectly clear by him in I Corinthians 8:6 where he writes:

"To us there is one God, the Father, out of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ through whom are all things, and we through Him."

And Paul adds, with considerable significance, "But not in all is there this knowledge." Also in our day and age he might well have written "But not many know this." And if we may be permitted to continue in the current usage of speech, we could paraphrase the Apostle's words as meaning that to us there is one God—the Father Who is invisible spirit—and One Lord, Jesus Christ, Who is a personal human being. God, as invisible spirit, has the title Father because all creation originated in Him, as Paul says, "out of whom are all things."

Now, if you care to read again the earlier part of I Corinthians 8 it will be seen that before making his great Explanation which we have quoted, Paul had been speaking about idols; he said that an idol is nothing in the world; it is a human representation of a god which is unreal. It will be appreciated that no idol was regarded as a separate person from the god it represented, they were one, and the god was worshipped in the idol, and SEEN in the idol, which makes one wonder why they were and are usually so ugly! Paul's parallel is intended to show that God being One, the Father and the Son are complementary One to the Other, and we cannot have one without the other. It has been well expressed thus:—"Christ is the visible of the invisible, while the Father is the invisible of the visible Christ. Christ is the perfect Image of God." This is undoubtedly the truth of the matter, and it by no means makes Christ another "Person."

Paul, writing of Christ to the Colossians (2:9) also says, according to the A. V.: "In Him dwelleth the entire fulness of the Godhead bodily," which the C.V. translates as "in Him the entire complement of the Deity is dwelling bodily." The word "complement" is important, meaning THAT WHICH COMPLETES, so if we desire to have a complete appreciation of Deity we must regard, as One, the Father Who is Spirit and Christ His Complement Who is visible in bodily form to man.

For any human to fully "understand" God is manifestly impossible; the ability to do so would demand a knowledge greater than that of God Himself, but to a large extent we have been enabled to comprehend His Complement, Christ, for in all His words and actions He is proclaiming to us, this is what God is like. And His reactions to people and events portray precisely what is the Divine attitude. His Own statements underline this, such as His statement to Thomas: "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." Or again, "Believe the works; that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him," or again, to the Jews, "Ye neither know Me, nor My Father; if ye had known Me, ye should have known my Father also." And to make the matter beyond doubt, "I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things."

From among men we all know people who are difficult to understand, since they have many different aspects, sometimes seemingly paradoxical, and such apparent (but not real) contradictions we ought to expect to find in God to a much greater degree. The Jews found such puzzles in the Lord (Luke 5:26) when they exclaimed "We have perceived paradoxes today." And would it not seem paradoxical to us, too, were we to meet, in a Jewish street, a perfectly ordinary individual of no particular pretensions who was able, immediately and in public, not only to forgive sins but also to heal total paralysis?

This duality which we have shown to exist in accord with the Greek Scriptures is explanatory also of similar passages in the Hebrew Scriptures. Thus in Exodus 19:9, 18-20, for example, we read how Jehovah came down in flaming fire and smoke; whereas we know that God the Father, Who is invisible spirit, would never localize Himself or make Himself visible in such a way. This passage in Exodus reminds us immediately of II Thess. 1:8 where we read of the Lord Jesus being revealed from heaven "in flaming fire dealing out vengeance."

Thus, in our attempt to understand our God, the only logical conclusion must be that the Jehovah Who descended upon Mount Sinai was He Who also descended to earth as the Lord Jesus, having emptied Himself and exchanged the form of God for that of a slave! So, despite those who would argue that the God of the Hebrew Scriptures was different from the Christ of the Greek Scriptures, the answer to them must be that the Jesus they respect, and the great and terrible God of Sinai, are one and the same! Who brought the Flood on the Earth, or Who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah? Is this a blood-thirsty and vindictive Deity, or One Who must always maintain righteousness? He would not, naturally, fit in with the sentiment of today, with the do-gooders whose sympathies are all with the criminal, nor with their permissive attitudes, but with God there is always a clear distinction between right and wrong, and the great and terrible God of Sinai, so the record shows, was most intimate and friendly with such as Abraham and Moses; indeed, exactly as He still is in the person of Christ Jesus with those who honor and fear Him.

At Sinai Moses was terrified and trembling. The glory and the majesty of perfect holiness, perfect righteousness and perfect truth was too much for any human eyes. Yet men must learn that these things are true of God, before He can reveal His heart to them. But at the Cross He hid His heart no longer, as He descended to the lowest place in His universe. Was the face seen on the Cross any different from the one seen at Sinai? Certainly, Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration recognized the One he had seen long, before. Yet over the centuries Christendom has been puzzled over the paradox of that terrible God

of Sinai appearing as a Lamb dumb before its shearers. This is probably the greatest wonder in all the universe—but our God works wonders!

In His emptying, and within the self-imposed limitations of flesh, He had to "grow in wisdom" and He came to know "what was in man," as Luke and John tell us; in short, He acquired human wisdom, but with that extraordinary perception which came only of deep humility and close acquaintance with the Holy Spirit. Until His resurrection He acted with deliberately limited knowledge. Now He has all authority in heaven and earth. He must have obtained much knowledge regarding His Father and Himself from the Hebrew Scriptures, and in the Psalms, He must have gradually discovered that they spoke of Himself. Here again we see the duality of Father and Son, yet at the same time Their oneness. The Child of Bethlehem was not simultaneously operating the universe, and in His adult years He would not have admitted that His knowledge of coming events was limited, as He did (Matt. 24:36 and Mark 13:32), had He realized and was conscious of the fact that He was God. He had emptied Himself, and was related to God as Son to Father, and this emptying and deliberate limitation concealed from Him, for the time being, the complete consciousness that He was what we, with heart and soul and mind believe He was, and what Scripture declares He was—God manifest in flesh.

Cecil J. Blay (Treasures of Truth, Instalment Sixteen February-March 1975)

"A BODY HAST THOU PREPARED ME"

In Paul's last letter to Timothy (more precisely, the last letter of which we have any record) he indicated much concern about certain false teachings which appear to have emerged even at that early date. He seemed to foresee that these would flourish all the more after his own decease then closely impending. The letter suggests that he sensed a dark foreboding of a "subsequent era" when some who had been called through his ministry would no longer tolerate sound teaching. Having their ears tickled by things more appealing to spiritually immature minds, they would turn away from the truth and follow "after myths (4:3-4).

Now here where Paul was reasserting the truth of our Lord's resurrection out from among the dead, he apparently had some important reason to emphasize also His Davidic ancestry. He was not content to remind Timothy merely that Jesus Christ had been roused from the dead; that and nothing more. In the same connection he stressed the further truth that this One was "of the seed of David."

From a different letter it appears that possibly there were some in Paul's day who falsely proclaimed even "another Jesus" (II Cor. 11:4); conceivably someone NOT "of the seed of David;" one whom they worshiped in spirit and persuaded others to acknowledge.

Thus, it appears that such adversaries of Paul were opposing the truth of our Lord's resurrection by substituting a profession of someone else... or SOMETHING else; a deception Paul could best expose by appealing to the fact of our Lord's Davidic ancestry which had been well established in Hebrew prophecy and was afterward confirmed both by Matthew and Luke. In any event, there was obviously some imperative need for Paul's solemn reminder to Timothy; that the only One who had been permanently roused from among the dead had to be of David's seed and not "another Jesus." It was of paramount importance to establish both of those essential truths and to identify each with the other, especially if some were denying either or both.

Inferring here as we do, that Paul was confronted with this manner of opposition to his evangel, we can better appreciate the ominous tone of his warning to Timothy, "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel." It was most imperative that the Scriptural record of our Lord's nativity through the lineage of David should be defended and preserved so as to establish just how and through whom He had received His earthly body.

Now all this relates directly to the subject of this paper, based on a Scripture in Hebrew prophecy which our Lord had recognized and quoted as applying to Himself alone: "A body hast Thou prepared me."

These words concerning our Lord's body appear first as a prophecy in the Psalms (39:6 LXX) and the letter to the Hebrews confirms the fulfillment (Heb. 10:5 CLNT). John represents that body as a tent or tabernacle: "The Word became flesh and pitched his tent among us, and we gazed upon His glory". (John 1:14 Rotherham).

In the letter to the Hebrews as quoted from the Psalms we read first of "Sacrifice and offering" which is repeated and amplified as "whole-burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin" (Heb. 10:6). In the same letter we are reminded that the former Mosaic rituals had required continual repetition (Rev. 10:11) during those many centuries when all offerings for sin were humanly observed only by the sacrifice of animals. Israel realized little or scarcely at all that these were types or shadows of "good things to come" or "impending

good things" (Heb. 10:1). Neither did they understand that those rituals were temporary and would eventually pass away while the true Burnt-offering and Sacrifice for sin would be once for all and require no repetition (Heb. 10:11-14).

Instead of the many bulls and goats slain year after year, when our Lord appeared in a body uniquely prepared for Him, He would supply the substance of every offering reflected in the law; the burnt-offering, the sin-offering, the trespass offering, and of course the peace offering. Each of these types was fulfilled in Him by His unreserved and voluntary submission to the Father's will; a mission He acknowledged by the vow written for Him long before: "Lo! I am arriving to do Thy will O God!" (Heb. 10:7).

To become the true Burnt-offering, He appeared not only as the type had required "a male without blemish" (Lev. 1:3) but especially as "a sacrifice to God for a fragrant odor" (Eph. 5:2). It was not the fleeting fragrance of frankincense but the pure essence of our Lord's abiding obedience, faithful unto death, and into death. The burnt-offering He brought was clothed in a body of deep humiliation as another prophet had said of Him alone: "Despised is He and shunned by men, a man of pains and knowing illness" (Isa. 53:3). Yet so very precious was the spiritual fragrance of His offering that we know it was acknowledged by a voice from heaven: "This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I delight" (Matt. 3: 17).

The burning zeal of our Lord consumed that offering of His, remindful of the fire on the altar which burned without ceasing until every Mosaic sacrifice was wholly consumed (Lev. 6:12). This it seems was reflected by figure in one of the Psalms: "The zeal of Thy house will be devouring Me" (Psa. 69:9; John 2:17).

Yet our Lord's earthly body had been prepared not only as a burnt-offering for an ascending sweet savor but also as a "sacrifice for sin" (SIN in the singular as distinguished from "sins and offences.") For this we are told that "the One not knowing sin, He makes to be a sin offering for our sakes" (II Cor. 5:21) and "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sin's flesh...condemns sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). It was necessary that the Sin-offering should be from an ancestry of sin's flesh, but it was a sinless Person who took on that flesh to become the Sin-offering and He himself remained "apart from sin" (Heb. 4:15) while He was made to be "a sin offering for our sakes" (II Cor. 5:21).

The sin-offering differed in the type from that of the burnt-offering. Whereas the burnt-offering was all consumed upon the altar, most of the sin-offering was burned outside the camp (Lev. 4:11-12). Thus, in His role as the sin-offering our Lord was not to be offered as on Israel's sanctified altar but, like the carcass of the bullock which was carried away and burned without the camp, He was to suffer "outside the gate" (Heb. 13:12) upon the cross, there to be taunted and reproached by hostile Jews and Romans (Matt. 27:40-42). Thus, it was written of Him in the Psalms: "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me" (Psa. 69: 9). As the Sin-offering He alone was to deal with our depravity while stricken of men and smitten of God. On that day when the sun at noon was converted into darkness our Lord was to know a bitterness no words but His own can reveal: "My God! My God! Why didst Thou forsake Me?" (Matt. 27:46-47).

The trespass offering (Lev. 5 & 6:1-7) as distinguished from the sin offering must reflect still a different virtue of redeeming grace, atonement for individual sins and offences, even as the sin offering relates to racial sin and depravity in all of Adam's children. It was Isaiah who said, "He was wounded for our transgressions" (53:5). While those words must be restricted to Israel, a wider sphere of equal grace for all mankind was attested by John as well as Paul: "He is the propitiatory shelter concerned with our sins, yet not concerned with ours only, but concerned with the whole world also" (I John 2:2). "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3).

In the body prepared for our Lord's earthly ministry He supplied also the peace offering (Lev. 3:1-7; 7:11-18; 7:29-34). This is distinguished in a different way. In the Levitical services the peace offering was an offering of thanksgiving or at times it was a vow called a freewill or voluntary offering. Seeing that this too had been fulfilled in Christ, the Apostle Paul reminds us that "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14), a peace which was made through the Blood of the Cross (Col. 1:20). According to the law, the peace offering was the only sacrifice whereof the flesh might be eaten in part by the one who brought the offering, though only when the fat of the inwards was first removed and consumed on the altar as an ascending savor. This in its fulfillment may well suggest such spiritual communion as our Lord now shares with His body members here on earth in spiritual peace offerings of praise, thanksgiving and heart devotion. Even now we may commune with Him and He with us, mutually appropriating the fruits of His completed passion, the basis of our peace.

There are still other aspects of our Lord's ministry also reflected in the types of the law, some of which did not require the shedding of blood, therefore unlike those we have first considered. There was the meat offering (Lev. 2:1-16) and the drink offering, the first consisting of fine flour, oil and frankincense, a portion of which was burned on the altar for an ascending sweet savor. In our Lord's ministry this may well represent His many deeds of mercy to mankind, though rendered first as a service to God, in supplying that enormous deficiency wherein man had been found wanting of the glory of God, not alone by his absence of devotion to God but also in his failure of love for mankind, the two paramount precepts on which as our Lord said, "is hanging the whole law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:40). He atoned for that breach of divine law wherein man had wronged both God and mankind. This He did not by His death alone but also by His sanctified earthly life; as when He fed the multitudes, healed the sick, consoled the sorrowful and raised the dead. Though such miracles were local to the land of Israel, they served also as previews of His future glory when "the inhabitants of the world will have learned righteousness" (Isa. 26:9). His other offerings involved affliction of soul and dying on the cross where the giving of His blood was a prime factor, but meanwhile our Lord had gone about doing good in such other sacrifices where there was no shedding of blood. These were reflected as it seems in Israel's meat offerings and drink offerings wherein our Lord was "a benefactor and healer of all those tyrannized over by the Adversary" (Acts 10:38).

Thus far in this study the question has not been asked as to why or how the body of our Lord was said to be "prepared". The fact that He as a person was ideally prepared for His mission is not all that the text denotes; faith accepts that gladly. Here our attention is especially directed to the body our Lord would receive in which to perform His earthly mission. That body, as John indicates, was to serve as a "tent" or "tabernacle" for One who had been previously in the form of God until He temporarily divested Himself of that glory divine. The Son of God would come to earth and dwell among mankind. For that He would need an earthly body. As a Son of God who was not to have a human father, His blood would be unlike ours, but His body was to be the product of a predetermined ancestral line, including especially Abraham, Judah and David; not because those forebears of His were righteous in themselves but because they were identified with a covenant of promise and also of law, the virtue of which was all of God and not of man.

Our Lord stressed the fact that He had been sent only to Israel (Matt. 15:24-25) who were called "His people" and "His own" (Matt. 1:21; John 1:11). We have in the Scriptures the names of all His ancestors on the male side. With few exceptions we have no names of His ancestors on the female side, yet among those few one at least is well known to have come from outside of Israel; namely, Ruth of the Moabites. There could have been and probably were others from the Gentiles too, but as to this we are not told. Rachab, mother of Boaz (Matthew 1:5) is sometimes taken to be the Rahab from Jericho of Joshua's time, but when we observe from the same reference that Rachab is mentioned as being only four generations senior to David, there is some reason to question if she was the one of Joshua's time, unless possibly certain intermediate generations were omitted there in Matthew. On the other hand, it is well established

that our Lord's ancestors did include the beloved Ruth of Moab, daughter-in-law of Naomi from Judah. After the death of Ruth's first husband, who was the son of Naomi, Ruth became the wife of Boaz from Judah, a kinsman of Naomi, whereupon Boaz and Ruth became the parents of Obed, grandfather of David; all as verified by the book of Ruth. The Moabites from whom Ruth came were originally of Lot, a nephew of Abraham, so Ruth was at least in part a Shemite but not of Israel.

From incidents such as David's grievous sin when he took Bathsheba to be his wife by first contriving to have her husband slain in battle, we see the Scriptures were not designed to conceal blemishes of character in our Lord's ancestors, even in the best of them, as David himself afterward confessed with deep remorse: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight, that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest" (Psalm 51:4). Indeed, there was not then, nor ever since, any human flesh, Jew or Gentile, from which our Lord's ancestors could have been chosen to generate a heritage helpful to Him in the trials and sufferings He was destined to endure. It appears His ancestors were chosen rather to produce a body representative of a race lost in sin; "the likeness of sin's flesh" (Rom. 8:3); of the "old humanity" He would carry to the cross in the body prepared for Him. Yet even in such a body He himself remained holy and "apart from sin;" that indwelling sin inherent to all others as the consequence of Adam's transgression. He was unlike us in the sense that He was not of Adam's blood and His spirit was divine even from the moment when the embryo of His body was vitalized at Mary's conception (Luke 1:35). In that body he learned obedience from all that He suffered (Heb. 5:8,9) and we conclude that those sufferings were intensified because of His human heritage in the body prepared for Him, but His holiness, faithfulness and filial obedience can be attributed only to His other heritage as the Son of God.

An indication that some of our Lord's ancestors from the female side would be chosen from the Gentiles appears to be foreshadowed in God's instructions to Moses for the building of the tabernacle containing the ark of the covenant. The tabernacle was covered first with rams' skins dyed red and above those was an exterior covering of badgers' skins (Ex. 26:14). From this we observe that the covering nearest the ark of the covenant was from skins of domestic animals while the outer covering was from animals of the wilds. We know that the children of Israel were frequently represented as sheep; for example, "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:6). In accord with those symbols it appears that the body of our Lord in which He would "tabernacle" among mankind was to be composed primarily of Israelitish heritage corresponding with the rams' skins dyed red, used for the inner covering of the tabernacle, but there was also the element of Gentile ancestry represented by the skins of badgers from the wilds, foreign to Israel's domestic flock, which formed the outer covering of the tabernacle; a little further removed from the ark of the covenant.

There are still other indications which show that our Lord nourished within Himself something like a latent affinity for the Gentiles; for even though He faithfully recognized Israel's favorite position as the covenant nation, there were what appeared in part like only casual events from the time of His birth which suggested some impending favor for the Gentiles. When He was yet a little boy, scarcely more than two years old, Joseph and Mary had been warned by a messenger they must take Him and flee into Egypt for temporary protection from Herod who was seeking the child to destroy His life. We are told those circumstances had been divinely prearranged to fulfill a prophecy saying, "Out of Egypt I call my Son" (Matt. 2:15).

Our Lord's home town of Nazareth and the city of Capernaum where He afterward lived were in a region called "Galilee of the Gentiles," and that too was in fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 9:1; Matt. 4:15). Capernaum was situated in the land allotted to Naphtali, a son of Jacob born from Rachel's handmaid Bilhah, a woman of unrevealed ancestry but evidently not of Hebrew descent (Gen. 30:7, 8; 35:25). Since our Lord came from the tribe of Judah, He was not of her lineage but the land of Bilhah's son Naphtali

where Capernaum lay was peculiarly identified in Scripture as Galilee of the Gentiles, and it seems there was where our Lord preferred to live.

On a later occasion when He had been witnessing in Judea where certain Jews were seeking to kill Him before the time, He set out for return to Galilee and must then of necessity go through Samaria, another country He loved and favored. It was from that region He chose for a certain role in one of His parables the familiar character of “the good Samaritan” while in the same parable He placed the priests and Levites of Israel in a less commendable light (Luke 10:30-35).

When He journeyed farther north beyond the boundaries of His native land into the region of Tyre and Sidon where a Canaanitish woman there pleaded with Him to heal her demonized daughter, though of course she was not of Israel, our Lord at length commended her for her remarkable faith and acceded to her pleading by healing her daughter as she had begged Him to do (Matt. 15:21-28). On another occasion He healed the servant of a Gentile centurion in Capernaum, saying He had not found such faith as his anywhere in Israel (Matt. 8:5-12).

Though He honored Abraham, He told those among the Jews who were seeking to kill Him that they were not doing the works of Abraham, thus exposing the fact that their lives were not consistent with Abraham's faith, especially when they sought to kill Him while He was only telling them the truth (John 8:33-40).

That, of course, did not at all reflect on others in Israel who acknowledged and received our Lord as the One sent of God in accord with Hebrew prophecy. We are reminded that there is no partiality with God which we take to mean irrespective of any race or color (Rom. 2:11, Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). All in Christ are known as a new creation (II Cor. 5:17) wherein every former distinction such as Jew, Gentile, slave or free has forever passed away, to be superseded now by an all-embracing spiritual unity of God in Christ—and Christ in all His own.

Melvin E. Johnson (Treasures of Truth, Instalment Fifteen, November-December 1974)

A SECRET CONTRASTED WITH A PROPHECY

The three Scriptures which serve as the basis for this paper are well familiar to most of our readers. In the interest of brevity, we are not quoting the content of each, only the references, but we suggest that what follows here may serve its purpose better if the reader will first review the Scriptures we are about to consider and have their content in view as we proceed.

The first is found in I Cor. 15:51-53 and it tells of one of the "secrets" which Paul revealed. The second is in First Thess. 4:15-17, a passage which sheds much light on the first though it does not mention the secret as such. The third passage is found in Revelation 11:15-18, a book of prophecy. Being therefore a part of prophecy, that passage must be distinguished from a "secret," for a secret is something which had not appeared anywhere else in Scripture before it was revealed. As terms of reference here, we shall call these three Scriptures, respectively, "the Corinthian text," "the Thessalonian text," and "the Revelation prophecy."

The "secret" revealed in the Corinthian text pertains to the future resurrection and glorification of saints who will have been called through the Apostle Paul's ministry. From the Concordant Version we quote Paul as saying: "Lo! a secret to you am I telling." No such secret as he reveals there is found anywhere in Hebrew prophecy. The Authorized Version says, "The trumpet shall sound," and while the Concordant Version mentions no trumpet as such, it indicates the effect or the action proceeding from a trumpet: "He will be trumpeting." That results in a series of "trumps" or trumpet sounds, and these culminate in what is called "the last trump." This, as we are about to observe, has nothing in common with the last of seven trumpets which appear in the Revelation prophecy. The "last trump" in Corinthians is one of numerous trumpet sounds proceeding from a single trumpet which in the Thessalonian text is called "the trumpet of God." There the Lord Himself is said to be descending from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the Chief Messenger, and with the trumpet of God. We are told that "the dead in Christ shall be rising first." They will at length respond to "the last trump" proceeding from that single trumpet. "Thereupon," the Thessalonian text continues, "we, the living who are surviving, shall at the same time be snatched away together with them ... to meet the Lord in the air." That coincides exactly with the Corinthian text which says that "the dead" (the dead in Christ) "will be roused incorruptible" and then "we" (the surviving ones mentioned in the Thessalonian text) "shall be changed."

According to the Thessalonian text, it appears as if "the Lord Himself" and "the Chief Messenger" are one and the same. It may seem somewhat strange at first that our Lord should appear in the role of a messenger, even though it be "the Chief Messenger;" yet possibly this serves to accentuate the vast difference between that prior meeting in the air and His ultimate return to Israel after seven trumpets are sounded there by seven successive messengers in the Revelation prophecy. Then He comes, as we are told in Matthew also, with "all the holy messengers" (25:31). The prophecy of Daniel indicates that "thousand thousands will be ministering to Him and ten thousand times ten thousand" (7:10) will be standing before Him. In contrast to that vast multitude of messengers, it appears that the prior meeting with the saints in the air (those who have been called through Paul's ministry) will be a very intimate and personal meeting. Then the Lord alone as "the Chief Messenger" from celestial realms will come to meet privately with His saints alone. According to Corinthians and Thessalonians, they will respond to the trumpeting which proceeds from the single trumpet called "the trumpet of God." Still from that lone trumpet it appears there will be numerous successive crescendos of trumpet peals, for it is only at "the last trump" that the dead in Christ will be rising first, exactly as we are told in the Corinthian text. It is obvious that the saints there in view are distinctly different from others who are to appear long afterward from a future reascent Israel

when the last one of seven successive messengers begin to sound his trumpet. None of those seven in the Revelation prophecy is "the Lord Himself;" none is "Chief." Preparatory to that climactic moment in the Revelation prophecy when the kingdom and power of our Lord Jesus Christ is to be triumphantly announced by "loud voices in heaven" those seven messengers with seven trumpets will be preparing the way just as the King of Glory is about to arrive so that He can be seen from an earthly point of view; quite different from the prior meeting in the air when He will have been manifested privately only to His saints. We repeat for emphasis here that none of the seven messengers in the Revelation prophecy is "the Lord Himself." They all precede Him as heralds before the King.

The closer we observe the Revelation prophecy, the more unlike it becomes to the "secret" in Corinthians or the meeting in the air to which that secret relates. As the seventh messenger sounds his trumpet, we note there are great voices in heaven proclaiming that the kingdom of this world—apparently just then—has become the kingdom of our LORD and of His CHRIST. "Thou hast taken thy great power and dost reign." At that triumphant moment the judgment of the unsaved dead comes into view but first, as we are told, there is to be the payment of "wages" to the prophets and saints of Israel. That prophecy anticipates our Lord's long-awaited descent back to Mount Olivet, the point from which He ascended into heaven, in fulfilment of Acts 1:9-11 and Zach. 14:4 with other Hebrew prophecy, such as Dan. 7:10,11. There will be faithful ones in Israel awaiting Him then (Heb. 9:28) just as there were some who witnessed His departure from Mount Olivet (Acts 1:11). In our Lord's great prophecy of Matthew 24 He indicates that persons such as those will be gathered together from various earthly pursuits, from far and near (vss. 40-42), because first "He shall be dispatching His messengers with a loud sounding trumpet (vs. 31—presumably one such trumpet for each such messenger—"and they shall be assembling His chosen (ones) from the four winds"—from all over the earth from under all the extremities of our local heavens.

It seems this should well establish that the messengers and trumpets of the Revelation prophecy are immediately precedent to the messengers and trumpets appearing in Matt. 24 and Daniel 7:10; yet those numerous messengers and trumpets in Revelation, in Matthew and in Daniel have no remote identity with the "secret" Paul reveals in the Corinthian text or the Thessalonian meeting in the air which clearly pertains to saints of an entirely different calling who ascend from the earth to meet our Lord in the air as the dead among them respond to the trumpeting which proceeds from a single trumpet, "the trumpet of God;" an event which has no parallel anywhere in Hebrew prophecy, nor in the book of Revelation.

There is however a passage in one of Paul's prison epistles, still further removed from any semblance of Hebrew prophecy, which coincides well with the secret in Corinthians and the Thessalonian meeting in the air. "Our realm," it says (our commonwealth or homeland) is in the heavens out of which we are awaiting a Savior also, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transfigure the body of our humiliation to conform it to the body of His glory, in accord with the operation which enables Him even to subject all to Himself (Philippians 3:20-21). Bodies of present humiliation transfigured to conform to "the body of His glory" is something which coincides beautifully with such "change" or transfiguration as we note must directly precede the meeting in the air. The bodies of mortal saints will be "changed," as the Corinthian text informs us, to a future state of immortality.

The "secret" in Corinthians is but one of numerous secrets which Paul revealed, including some before and others subsequent to the secret in Corinthians which we have considered here (Rom. 11:25; 16:25; Eph. 1:9; 3:3-9; 6:19; Col. 1:26-27; 4:3). He indicates also there were secrets he first revealed only orally, not to many but to such of the saints as he called "the mature" (I Cor. 2:6-7). Thus, the time when each secret was revealed to others cannot be conclusively established, nor is it vital for us to know. All we can determine is the place and the approximate time when any specified secret was recorded in one of Paul's letters which have been preserved for our learning.

The Thessalonian text contains a certain indefinite time designation which indicates only that the meeting in the air will occur at some unrevealed time called "the presence of the Lord." PRESENCE from the Greek "parousia" is defined as "beside-being." There is, however, a certain "presence" indicated also in Matthew 24 where our Lord's disciples were asking "What is the sign of Thy presence and of the conclusion of the eon?"

Consequently, there is a "presence of the Lord" relating alternately at different times to different people; first to saints of a prior calling largely from among the Gentiles, later to saints of a future calling from the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus, we learn of a presence which is not to be seen from the earth though it will be near enough for our Lord to meet His saints in the air. Long afterward there is a presence which culminates in His personal unveiling to earthly Vision, for it is then with power and great glory that He descends upon Mount Olivet (Matt. 24:30; Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7; 14:14).

In Matthew 24: 37-39 our Lord compared His future presence to the days of Noah, saying that conditions will prevail in the days of His presence like unto those which did prevail in Noah's time until the day when he entered the ark just before the flood came and destroyed all others than Noah and his family. In Luke 17:26-30 He referred not to the days of His presence as such but to "the days of the Son of Mankind," a different term for the same event which He compared there also to the days of Noah as well as the days of Lot in Sodom. Here we observe with particular interest that as long as He spoke about "the days of the Son of Mankind" only, and compared those to the days of Noah and of Lot, He spoke in the plural of DAYS, but directly afterward He referred to the moment when the Son of Mankind is to be revealed or "unveiled," and He likened that to a single day in the life of Lot, "the day in which Lot came out from Sodom when fire and sulphur rained from heaven and destroyed them all." Our Lord said like unto that will it be on the (singular) DAY in which the Son of Mankind is unveiled.

Thus, whether we consider "the presence of the Lord" according to Matthew or "the days of the Son of Mankind" according to Luke, it becomes apparent that the time denoted by either of those two terms is relatively long as compared with the single day when the Son of Mankind is to be unveiled. That will be instantaneous, represented only by that one day on which Lot fled out of Sodom. On the other hand, "the presence of the Son of Mankind" or "the days of the Son of Mankind" denotes not only a plurality of days but, more conceivably also, a plurality of YEARS, and, unlike what is often assumed, it may well involve hundreds of years, including what Hebrew prophecy frequently calls "the latter days" as distinguished from the former days of Israel's Mosaic era, The Law and The Prophets; therefore suggesting a future pre-millennial era when a restored covenant nation will be served once again by a Levitical priesthood in accord with Ezekiel's prophecy (44:14-24) which essentially precedes a royal Melchisedec priesthood for the subsequent Millennial eon.

Here we have not failed to observe that both in Matthew and Luke our Lord spoke directly only of CONDITIONS which prevailed both in the days of Noah and of Lot, and these He compared to His future presence or "the days of the Son of Mankind." He of course did not say also that the number of days or years which will be required for His "presence" will be exactly the same in number as the days covered by Noah's lifetime, or the days or years required for the building of the ark, or the number of years that Lot may have dwelt in Sodom. Consequently, in the published accounts of both Matthew and Luke where these report only what our Lord said directly about the days of His presence before He is to be revealed, or "the days of the Son of Mankind," we should note accordingly that He made no DIRECT mention of the duration which His presence will require, yet the comparison to the days of Noah may in itself also imply a time likeness between the historic past and the prophetic future.

Since our Lord used the days of Noah to foreshadow the days of His presence, and since He used the singular day on which Lot fled out of Sodom to foreshadow the climactic moment of His future unveiling,

we observe here (without insisting upon it) that the days of His presence may have also a time resemblance either to the six hundred years of Noah's life before the flood or the time required for Noah and his household to build an ark dimensionally greater in volume than many of our boasted engineering achievements of modern times. We are reminded here that the LONG SUFFERING of God waited (our emphasis) in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared (I Pet. 3:20). Again, we are reminded that there will be similar circumstances in the days of our Lord's presence because of which some then also will misappropriate the "longsuffering" of God as their ancestors did in the days of Noah. "There will be scoffers," we are told, "going about and saying—no doubt nonchalantly—"Where is the promise of His presence" (II Pet. 3:4)? To them in that day, there will be no evidence of any oncoming peril to indicate the forthcoming unveiling of a "presence" seemingly long delayed by the longsuffering of God then also.

All this appears to suggest, the same as much other Scripture does elsewhere, that there is first to be a divinely restored Israel, with a new Levitical priesthood, followed by a prolonged though temporary time of world peace, until that new covenant nation degenerates once again into another apostasy before they shall look upon Him whom their fathers have pierced (Zech 12:10).

Melvin E. Johnson (Treasures of Truth, Instalment Sixteen, February-March 1975)

FROM JUDAISM TO PAULINE CHRISTIANITY

Under the topic of "dispensational truth" those further revelations which had been unknown until Paul's ministry have been devoutly explored by many. The purpose has been to observe how the teachings of Paul are distinguished from those of The Twelve, and that remains a most important distinction. Yet this need not, and it should not, obscure the importance of an earlier revelation which came through the sudden and strange appearing of John the Baptist to announce the advent of a King and a kingdom.

Perhaps that pivotal point in history comes into sharper focus from the emphasis supplied by the words of our Lord. "The law and the prophets," He said, "are unto John; thenceforth the evangel of the kingdom of God is being brought" (Luke 16:16 CLNT). "Not among those born of women has there been roused a greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is smaller, in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he" (Matt. 11:11). John was the last of the ancient Hebrew prophets, greater than any who had come before, and accordingly our Lord said he was "exceedingly more than a prophet," for of him it was written in Isaiah, "Lo: I am dispatching my messenger before Thy face, who shall be constructing Thy road in front of Thee" (Matt. 11:10).

True to the ministry he had been sent to perform, John disowned any honor for himself. "I am," he said, "the voice of one imploring"—thus nothing more than a "voice"—but "in the midst of you," he continued, "One stood of Whom you are not aware ... am not worthy that I should be loosing the thong of His sandal" (John 1:23-27 CLNT). "He must increase but I must decrease" (3:30).

John appeared at that stupendous moment in history when all that was reflected in the law and the prophets would materialize in a Person; God manifest in flesh; a light shining in a world of darkness; yet that light was concealed, as it were, in an earthen vessel and therefore largely unseen. Nevertheless, the King had come, king of a kingdom both earthly and heavenly, a kingdom universal, the increase whereof there will be no end.

There may be a valid question if the sense of the vital word which serves as the keynote of John's ministry was not regretfully blurred to our perception by the rendering from Greek into Latin and from Latin into English. "Repent," as we have it in the authorized version, was rendered from the Latin POENITENTIA, but the Greek is METANOEO, a verb from the noun METANOIA which consists of "change" (for META) and "mind" (for NOIA); thus, a change of mind; so METANOEO appears to suggest an appeal to change the mind; and, according to its Scriptural usage, this may well extend also to a change of heart, thus an emotional change. Yet in an earlier English version the Latin POENITENTIA, which relates to punishment, was so rendered as to suggest "do penance" and so it was misused to support an ancient Roman ritual. Even now if we should assume that the English "repentance" is a true and adequate equivalent of the Greek METANOIA and that it was adopted to rectify the former connotation of doing penance, a serious question still remains if the usage of "repentance" has fully achieved that purpose, or if it continues to convey something of the former misconception relating to penance; especially because of its obvious root resemblance to POENITENTIA. Be that as it may, the fact remains that there was no taint of penance in John's message.

This of course is not to deny that one startling effect of METANOIA (if not rather a precondition thereof) is truly an awareness and conviction of sin; much as when the prophet Isaiah was suddenly confronted with the glory of the Lord, because of which he in awe and reverence then exclaimed, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5).

When John appeared so that he might announce to Israel the One who was about to come, we are not told how many or how few of that generation were convicted in like manner by an abrupt change of mind, resulting in a sudden and acute awareness that the former blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins, for these could be atoned only by the Blood of the Lamb. Yet for any who did experience that conviction, John promptly directed their attention to "the Lamb of God Which is taking away the sin of the world," whereupon he also enjoined a baptism of METANOIA for the remission of sins.

Yet we repeat that the word METANOIA itself has no inherent connotation of punishment or doing penance; it suggests rather a change of mind and heart which, in the context of John's ministry, seems especially relevant to a change of mental direction from the shadow of the law to the substance embodied in the Person of Christ as King of the kingdom of God. Paul indicates, however, that "sorrow according to God is *producing* repentance" (II Cor. 7:10) so in that light METANOIA becomes the effect of what David called "a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart;" thus a heart transformed to gratefully receive and appropriate the Blood of the Lamb, the only atonement for sins which God will accept; a far cry from the mistaken thought of doing penance.

Our Lord, as we are told, came soon after John had announced the King and the kingdom. "Fulfilled," said He, "is the era"—the era of the law and the prophets—"and near is the kingdom of God. Repent and believe in the evangel" (Mark 1:15).

It was not as if the law and the prophets would cease to exist, for our Lord said clearly, they were to remain for total fulfilment (Matt. 5:17-18). Wherever any such fulfilment did occur during His earthly ministry, these are clearly stated (* Matthew 1:22-23; 2:15; 2:17-18; 2:23; 8:17; 12:17-18; 13:13-15; 13:35; 21:4-5; 27:9-10; Mark 15:28; Luke 4:18-21; John 12:38-40; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 19:24; 19:36.); ten or more of such in Matthew, at least one each in Mark and Luke, six in John, and the single one in Acts concerning Judas (1:16,17) was also fulfilled during our Lord's earthly ministry though not declared by Peter until afterward. The number of such fulfilments stated here is intentionally conservative, for the purpose has been to exclude duplications wherever the same incident occurs in more than one account.

Except for those prophecies which were recorded as having been fulfilled before Pentecost, all other parts of Hebrew prophecy are reserved for future fulfilment after the beginning of Israel's forthcoming renaissance. It is therefore significant that no further fulfilments of Hebrew prophecy are said to have occurred even until now; neither in Acts, nor in the epistles of Paul, nor in those of The Twelve. Yet the kingdom of God as first announced by John and then by our Lord was ordained to continue from that time onward. "The law and the prophets," we are told, "were until John; thenceforth the evangel of the kingdom of God is being brought" (Luke 16:16).

The Pharisees too were expecting a kingdom, but their inquiry betrayed the fact that they envisioned only a kingdom of earthly and political constitution; something visible to the eye of flesh; and our Lord's reply indicates they were mistaken. "The kingdom of God," He said, "cometh not with observation." Here we prefer the Rotherham version: "The kingdom of God cometh not with narrow watching; Neither shall they say—Lo here! or There. For Lo! the kingdom of God is among you!" (Luke 17:20-21). The kingdom of God, then already present in our Lord as the King, was something the Pharisees could not understand, and they would respect no evidence which they could not see with eyes of flesh.

Now inasmuch as those several fulfilments of prophecy which did occur during our Lord's earthly ministry were carefully recorded and we find no further fulfilment recorded thereafter, this becomes significant. We repeat this cannot mean that large remaining areas of Hebrew prophecy are to go unfulfilled; yet neither can it mean that the kingdom our Lord had proclaimed was to pass into eclipse and remain inoperative for a time until some further fulfilment of Hebrew prophecy is due. The fact remains

that the kingdom had arrived and was present even among the Pharisees, though they knew it not. Moreover, it was destined to continue from "thenceforth," even from John's time onward, yet not in a form whereof it could be said "Lo here! or There." The kingdom of God from that time onward was to be "not with narrow watching" or "not with observation," as the authorized version has it. Thus, it would continue also until a time yet future when the same kingdom will materialize in earthly as well as heavenly form.

Still when Pilate was apparently interested to learn if the kingdom of God which our Lord had proclaimed was in any way prejudicial to the current Roman kingdom, our Lord replied, "My kingdom is not of this world." It was not of that KOSMOS we still have here on earth today, but it would continue unseen to eyes of flesh from that time onward. As for any possible threat to then existing world governments, Pilate had no need to fear. The kingdom of God, in its then existing spiritual form, was seeking no political earthly jurisdiction. Our Lord said further it was "not hence" which could suggest also that the kingdom of God in earthly form was not from that time, but this would not deny that the same kingdom of God in spiritual form was already present in our Lord and would continue without interruption. He indicated further that His then existing kingdom consisted of truth alone and His testimony to the truth. "For this also have I been born, and for this have I come into the world, that I should be testifying to the truth" (John 18:33-37).

Our Lord did not tell Pilate, and even His own disciples did not yet understand, that the realization of future royal glory, both earthly and heavenly, had to be obtained at the price of Blood. Dominion had to be wrested away from a powerful enemy. "For this was the Son of God manifested; that He should be annulling the works of the Adversary" (I John 3:8). This was to be neither by political intrigue nor by force of arms. It was therefore not as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah that our Lord appeared then to establish a beachhead for His kingdom; rather as a Lamb having been slain from before the foundation of the world (I Pet.1:20). In a realm where death had reigned supreme, the Lord of glory would meet and destroy the power of the Adversary only by means of His own death; "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14 KJV).

Our Lord came proclaiming the evangel of a kingdom which no one then understood; and perhaps even now it is widely misunderstood in the context of one or another of variant teachings. To The Twelve who followed Him through the time of His earthly ministry, their fondest hope was then mistakenly centered on the early establishment of an earthly kingdom where they, together with Him, were presumably soon to reign on earthly thrones. Even when He told them plainly that He would be rejected by their existing generation (Luke 17:25) while His immediate mission was to suffer and die on the Cross at the hands of the Gentiles, Luke tells us "they understood none of these things ... and they knew not what was said" (Luke 18:31-34).

Apparently, the disciples were no further enlightened even when our Lord stood talking with them on Mount Olivet at the impending moment of His ascension, forty days after He had risen from the dead. Even then they were vainly inquiring if He wasn't now about to restore the earthly kingdom they had longingly awaited so that they could finally begin to reign with Him in earthly glory (Acts 1:6,7).

Avoiding a direct reply which our Lord well knew they were not yet able to bear until they would receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost only ten days later, He thus alluded instead to that forthcoming event and the mission they were to perform after they would receive power from on high. Until then even Peter would not be prepared to use the keys of the kingdom which were previously promised especially to him (Matt. 16:19). Until then the disciples did not understand that the kingdom John had announced, which our Lord had proclaimed, and which Paul continued to herald until he died (*Acts 20:25; 28:23,31; Col. 1:13; 4:11; II Tim. 4:18)—first to Jews and then to Gentiles—is a kingdom universal; heavenly as well as earthly.

Though it will include a future earthly glory for Israel in an era now impending the same kingdom of God has continued to be operative in the hearts of believers who in spirit are no longer either Jew or Gentile but "a new creation" (Rom. 14:17; II Cor. 5:17).

Meanwhile most of Christendom has lost sight of the fact that the present spiritual kingdom ever will materialize in earthly form in future fulfilment of the law and the prophets; but also, who do know this have mistakenly inferred that for the present time the kingdom has been suspended and displaced by the effects of Paul's ministry; a thought quite foreign to his own teaching.

The kingdom of God which Paul proclaimed is the same kingdom as John had announced when it was drawing near in the Person of the King. It is the same kingdom which will materialize with Israel at a time yet future. In form the kingdom of God may change from time to time but in essence it remains unchanged. The essence of the kingdom is the reign of God in the hearts of men. At a time yet future The Twelve will eat and drink at some table of our Lord in His earthly kingdom (Luke 22:30) but at present the kingdom consists not in food and drink but in what Paul called "righteousness and peace and joy in holy spirit" (Rom. 14:17). At present it is only for some who are being rescued out of the jurisdiction of Darkness and are being transported into the kingdom of the Son of God's love (Col. 1:13). Therefore, the kingdom of God embraces and transcends the revelation and realization of every secret which Paul was graced to reveal, even as it meanwhile embraces and transcends other secrets incident to another phase of the kingdom, including secrets which have been intentionally concealed in parables until that future time when they will be fully revealed under a new administration of Israel's renaissance (Matt. 13:11; 19:28).

Many present-day saints are of course well aware that an earthly form of the kingdom will appear at a time yet future when further fulfilment of Hebrew prophecy is due to resume; yet it seems that not all have shared the same readjustment of understanding as the early disciples realized from Pentecost onward. Some have assumed instead that those disciples went on expecting an earthly kingdom in apostolic days. Since it did not materialize then, many have now inferred mistakenly that everything denoted by the kingdom of God was postponed and went into eclipse for the duration of the present calling of those saints who will constitute the body of Christ, as if the kingdom cannot coexist with such a calling, although Paul's epistles testify that he continued to herald the Kingdom of God as long as he lived, according to Scriptures previously cited here.

During our Lord's earthly ministry, even up to the time of His impending death on the Cross, it appears that the privileges of Israel's national covenant had remained in effect, as if they of that favored nation were yet legally eligible for the kingdom, but only few of them entered; namely, The Twelve (including Matthias in place of Judas) and about one hundred twenty others (Acts 1:16). Meanwhile the Pharisees had succeeded in locking up the kingdom to all others (Matt. 23:13). Then at the near approach of our Lord's death on the Cross, it appears that all remaining covenant privilege was foreclosed to the nation at large by these His last ominous words to Jerusalem, the capital of that former covenant nation:

"Jerusalem! Jerusalem! That slayeth the prophets and stoneth them that have been sent unto her. How often would I have gathered thy children, like as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, —And ye would not: Lo! your house is left to you; For I say unto you—In no wise may ye see me henceforth until ye say, *Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord*" (Matt. 23:37-39 Rotherham).

No mere inference can establish that the *national* import of those crucial words was ever afterward reversed or rescinded; not even by our Lord's intercessory prayer for Roman soldiers who were nailing Him to the Cross (Luke 23:34) nor by Stephen's dying intercession for some of his own kinsmen while they were stoning him to death (Acts 7:59-60). Neither of those intercessions could be of any immediate effect to the nation at large, for as John confirms while quoting from Isaiah, "*they could not believe*"

because their hearts were to be calloused (John 12:39-40) until a time yet future when they shall indeed say "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." That cannot occur now until after the future fulfilment of much present remaining unfulfilled Hebrew prophecy.

Yet beyond the Cross the kingdom of God which our Lord had proclaimed was to be further announced, first to individual Jews and later to individual Gentiles, though not as some potentially impending earthly kingdom. Peter's message at Pentecost was basically this; that He who was crucified had been roused from the dead and had ascended to heaven; that God had made Him to be both Lord and Christ; and because of this the Holy Spirit had been sent forth according to God's promise. Then as convicted hearts inquired "What shall we be doing?" they were enjoined by Peter to "Repent (Greek, METANOEO) and be baptized each of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the pardon of your sins and you shall be obtaining the gratuity of the holy spirit." By such means from Pentecost onward the keys of the kingdom which had been promised only to Peter were being used to obtain kingdom access, first for individual Jews and later for individual Gentiles beginning with Cornelius. Those were *plural* "keys" for a dual purpose; much alike but they were not duplicates; and so, Peter's messages at Jerusalem and at Caesarea were much alike, having also the same effect on Jews and Gentiles alike, but the messages were not identical.

Cornelius is sometimes said to have been a proselyte, but this is not affirmed in Scripture; by inference it is rather denied. If Cornelius had been a proselyte there is no apparent reason why anyone else of The Twelve or even of the seven (Acts 6:5,6) could not have been sent to him but it is evident that Peter's personal presence was imperative. He alone had the alternate key to unlock the kingdom for Gentiles as he first had done for Jews and proselytes at Jerusalem. On a prior occasion Philip, who was one of the seven, had been sent to evangelize the Ethiopian eunuch who was unquestionably a proselyte, for he had worshiped in the temple at Jerusalem, not permitted to others than Jews and proselytes; yet later when Philip had arrived at Caesarea where Cornelius lived, he was not sent to Cornelius (Acts 8:40). That later required the personal visit of Peter and a key different from the one he had used at Jerusalem because Cornelius was the first Gentile to whom the kingdom was evangelized and when Peter long afterward referred to that incident, he identified Cornelius as a Gentile, not as a proselyte, for Peter said, "Ye know, that a good while ago God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe" (Acts 15:7 KJV).

This dual access to the kingdom, first to Jews and then to Gentiles, had to precede Paul's subsequent ministry. This becomes apparent because Paul had been called before the conversion of Cornelius; yet no one but Peter, not even Paul, could be sent to Cornelius when that visit concerned citizenship in the kingdom of God which is not to be mistaken for such different and special revelations as were separately disclosed first only to Paul. He alone could announce the revelation of a secret which he thus defined: "In spirit the Gentiles are to be joint enjoyers of an allotment and a joint body, and joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 3:6).

The revelation of that secret, which shows that chosen Gentiles together with descendants of a former covenant people are now joint participants in the body of Christ, is in full accord with a present evangel of the "uncircumcision" a term of contrast to "circumcision," the sign of covenant. Kingdom citizens of this present era are called from "uncircumcision," for now there is no covenant nation. The present "evangel of the uncircumcision" was separately entrusted to Paul (Gal. 2:7). It is for kingdom citizens of this present era, now while there is no covenant nation.

A different evangel of the "circumcision" (the sign of covenant) is for kingdom citizens in a future era of Israel's renaissance. It was separately entrusted to Peter (Gal. 2:8) and it will become operative when Israel as a nation will become once again a covenant people. Meanwhile that evangel is necessarily held in abeyance.

In Jerusalem from Pentecost onward Peter spoke to the Jews as surviving descendants of a former covenant nation; "sons of the covenant which God covenanted with your fathers;" much like present living descendants of nations no longer existing who have no remaining privileges from a citizenship once enjoyed by their ancient ancestors. In like manner, national privileges which had been conditional on Israel's obedience had suffered default. Remembering too our Lord's last words to "Jerusalem, Jerusalem" (Matt. 23:37) and His equally solemn cursing of the symbolical fig tree as it suddenly withered (Matt. 21:19), it is scarcely conceivable how there could then remain any longer a covenant nation as such.

Yet descendant Jews at Pentecost were still individually "beloved because of the fathers;" and in relation to the kingdom of God they were to have a priority of call though not otherwise a preference; "to the Jew first and to the Greek as well." Thus, to suddenly convicted and bewildered survivors Peter spoke almost sympathetically; as if to mitigate their identity with guilt: "And now brethren, I know it was by way of ignorance ye acted" (Acts 3: 17).

Externally of course, there still remained the appearance of a nation, including a temple and Levitical services, which continued for about forty years longer; and, because of these, those individual Jews who were to be called into the kingdom could be approached in the familiar atmosphere of their long-cherished traditions, but the continuing sacrifice of animals was definitely no longer even a temporary covering for sins. All "circumcision" had become "uncircumcision" (Rom. 2:25).

Peter's letter, written in later years, appears to speak prophetically of that future era when Israel as a nation shall become once more a covenant people. There we read: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation *who once were not a people*" (our emphasis) yet *now* are the people of God, who "have not enjoyed mercy," yet now are "being shown mercy" (I Pet. 2:9,10). Though that letter was addressed to expatriates of the dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia and the province of Asia, it suggests a time then distantly future when Israel will have been restored as a royal priesthood and a holy nation after they long will have been "not a people." This was at most only faintly relevant to conditions prevailing when the letter was written but it will become vividly true of seven future ecclesias in Asia Minor—144,000 from The Twelve Tribes of Israel. They will be the fruitage resulting from a future proclamation of a "circumcision" evangel of covenant.

Fruitage produced from among the Jews of apostolic days was much different. While Paul lamented at the meager response of his brethren and relatives according to the flesh, to whom he proclaimed his own evangel of "uncircumcision," he shows that it did result at least in "a remnant according to the choice of grace," but except for that remnant, he plainly said "the rest were calloused" (Rom. 11:5-8). From this we must conclude that there was no other than those two alternatives for the Jews of apostolic days and it never had been God's purpose there should be any other. Everything the Holy Spirit led the apostles to do from Pentecost onward was essentially converging on that purpose of calling "a remnant according to the choice of grace" from among the Jews; and, simultaneously, an identical call from among the Gentiles. Peter was to unlock the kingdom first to the Jews and then to Gentiles Paul was to proclaim his own evangel to both alike. Neither Peter nor Paul encouraged any hope for some early manifestation of an earthly kingdom. This remains for a time yet future when Peter's "circumcision" evangel will be in season for a restored covenant nation.

Yet Paul as well as Peter made every effort consistent with faith to approach the Jews in their own traditional environment, though only to bring them into Christ. "To the Jews," he said, "I became as a Jew, that I should be gaining the Jews." Even in later years of his itinerant ministry he would hasten to be at Jerusalem for Pentecost (Acts 20:16). We are not told what his response may have been when some boasted to him about many tens of thousands who professedly "believed" yet meanwhile remained "zealous for the law" (Acts 21:20,21). Knowing how Paul said he himself had died to law so that he might

live unto God, we can only infer that he never tired of proclaiming the way of faith—righteousness "apart from works of law" for those who still sought to remain under law. Therefore, it is not inconceivable that he may have said to the zealots for the law at Jerusalem even as he wrote to zealots for the law in Galatia: "Tell me you who want to be under law, are you not hearing the law? ... we are not children of the maid (Hagar) but of the free Woman ... we are not under law but under grace" (Gal. 4:21-31; Rom. 6:15). Even in a future era when Israel once again shall serve under law as they did of old, it still will be true, then as now, that "by works of law no flesh at all shall be declared righteous" (Gal. 2:16). A stated remnant of Paul's kinsmen accepted this teaching of his and died unto law, even as he had died unto law, while the rest, as he said, were "calloused" until a complement from the Gentiles will have been obtained (Rom. 11:25).

Thus even as the kingdom of God now embraces and transcends the present era of Paul's ministry, it will yet embrace and transcend the forthcoming era of Israel's renaissance; beyond that it will also embrace and transcend the future millennial era for the judgment of the living nations, followed by a further era of new heavens and a new earth with a new creation; and since we are told that thereafter the Son shall be giving up the kingdom to His God and Father, all this becomes to the present eye of faith as when the solar light disappears in the west at eventide though we know the light remains beyond the range of our limited vision. Even so, the kingdom which we first beheld on Judea's eastern horizon is a kingdom advancing from glory to glory, the increase whereof there shall be no end.

Melvin E. Johnson (Treasures of Truth, Instalment Four, March 1972)

INTO A RESURRECTION OF LIFE

"Neither is the Father judging anyone, but has given all judging to the Son. Coming is an hour, and now is, when the dead shall be hearing the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall be living. And He (the Father) gives Him (the Son) authority to do judging, seeing that He is a son of mankind. Coming is an hour in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and those who do good shall go out into a resurrection of life, yet those who commit bad things into a resurrection of judging" (John 5:22-29 quoted in part).

"In accord with your hardness and unrepentant heart you are hoarding for yourself indignation in the day of indignation and revelation of the just judgment of God, Who will be paying each one in accord with his acts (his works):to those, indeed, who by endurance in good acts are seeking glory and honor and incorruption, life eonian; yet to those of faction, and stubborn, indeed, as to the truth, yet persuaded to injustice (He will be paying) ... indignation and fury, affliction and distress, on every soul which is effecting evil—yet glory and honor and peace to every worker of good ... in the day when God will be judging the hidden things of humanity according to my evangel, through Jesus Christ" (Rom. 2:5-16 quoted in part).

The passage from John's account is quoted as it reads in the Concordant Version with only brief annotations in parentheses. It bears a notable resemblance to an early part of Paul's letter to the Romans which appears following John's account. Both passages relate to a future experience of all who die unsaved. From Romans as well as John's account we are told of some future judgment when the unsaved dead will be judged according to their works, and the two Scriptures agree that good works as well as bad works will be taken into account.

The passage quoted from John's account is not restricted to Israel, nor is the quotation from Romans restricted to the Gentiles. Though it is true that John was one of The Twelve whose fortunes were otherwise localized to Israel, this quotation from his account has a wide application to all who will have died unsaved and come forth from the tombs together at some far distant "hour" beyond a future Millennium. They include Gentiles as well as the unsaved of Israel. Furthermore, these are not words supplied by John as a teacher. Here he was not teaching only faithfully reporting what our Lord had once spoken in the presence of His disciples which He said the Holy Spirit would recall to their memory, "reminding you of all that I said to you" (John 14:26).

Though Paul had been severed from the Twelve to evangelize the Gentiles as well as his own generation of Israel with a message of salvation in grace, received through faith, the passage quoted here from the early part of Romans does not allude to faith. It deals only with works, as do also the words of our Lord quoted here from John 5:28-29. It relates to the destiny of all the unsaved dead at some remote future judgment; some who by good works in this life are "SEEKING glory and honor and incorruption, life eonian," which no one can obtain that way, not even by the best of works, yet such are distinguished here from other persons whose works are "of faction, and stubborn, indeed, as to the truth," so those are said to

be "persuaded to injustice" (preferably "un-righteousness"). They are said to be hoarding for themselves "indignation in the day of indignation and revelation of the just (righteous) judgment of God."

We are told that all this will take place "in the day when God will be judging the hidden things of humanity according to my evangel, through Jesus Christ." Thus, even though judgments are not any part of the good news which constitutes Paul's evangel, they will be ACCORDING THERETO. For all those who even without the hearing of present faith are by nature disposed to good works and thereby instinctively seeking a righteousness not obtainable by works, those future judgments will yet result in "glory and honor and peace"—not because of the works but because persons disposed to good works will be predisposed and responsive to the righteousness of God in Christ, never before revealed to them until the righteous judgments of God are made manifest in that future day. On the other hand, for "every human soul which is affecting evil" there will be "indignation and fury, affliction and distress" though as Paul shows later (Rom. 5: 18,19), this does not preclude the ultimate salvation of all.

According to the text from Romans as well as the other from John's account, we perceive that when all in the tombs come forth at that far distant "hour", there will be a distinction between those having done good and those having done evil, yet they all come forth from the tombs unsaved. Unlike persons previously saved in grace, through faith, they will have had no part in any former resurrection, but some go out into a resurrection of life while for others there is to be a "resurrection of judging."

Lest those who then have done good should be mistaken for persons previously saved in grace through faith, it is well to reexamine the passage cited from John's account to note where believers do and do not appear. They DO appear in verse 25. For reasons yet to follow here, they do NOT appear in verses 28 and 29. Believers are in view where our Lord said first, "There cometh an hour and NOW IS" (our emphasis). From that "hour" onward He said some persons called "dead" would be hearing the voice of "the Son of God," a title He used of Himself only very seldom; a notable contrast to "The Son of Mankind" which He otherwise used most often. There were but precious few among the many who realized they were hearing "the voice of the Son of God" AS SUCH. From that hour onward, He said only those would be "living." They had not been physically dead but dead in their sins; like other persons our Lord called "dead" who were going about burying their dead (Matt. 8:22). In spirit and by faith those hearing and recognizing "the voice of the Son of God" AS SUCH would pass from death unto life. Others hearing a voice which they recognized only as the voice of a "son of mankind" would still remain "dead"; yet our lord said also it is just because He is indeed a "son of mankind" as well as The Son of God that He had been given authority to do judging.

Omission of the definite article here preceding "son of mankind" is very significant, for it is the only place where our Lord ever spoke of Himself only as "son of mankind," and this was not accidental. In more than eighty other passages He always used the definite article in referring to Himself as "The Son of Mankind," but this does not rule out that He is likewise a "son of mankind," one among many, whereas He alone is The Son of Mankind (literally THE SON OF THE HUMAN}, a title by which He distinguished Himself from all other sons of men.

There is an important reason for this. The first man Adam had been granted universal dominion over all the earth, so until the entrance of sin that dominion belonged potentially to all of Adam's posterity, but because his dominion had been lost through sin before Adam had any son, and since the effect of the first sin passed through to all mankind (Rom. 5:12), it follows that no son of Adam was eligible to redeem the lost dominion until the sinless One appeared. Thus, He became as Paul says, "the second man" and "the last Adam." According to John 5:22 our Lord had said "Neither is the Father judging anyone but has given all judging to the Son," yet according to verse 27 He was careful to indicate that this right of judging was contingent on the fact that He, like others, is a "son of mankind"; therefore, not as if He were

of another race, a foreigner unsympathetic to those He will judge, but He is one of their own flesh. He was made for a little while in all respects like His kinsmen of mankind except that, unlike them, He had no sin (Eeb. 2:9; 4:15).

The voice that all in the tombs will hear at some far future hour is still the voice of a "son of mankind," yet a voice speaking then with preeminent power and authority, because at that eventful moment the unsaved dead are to learn with astonishment that this is indeed The Son of God and uniquely THE Son of Mankind. At the command of that voice all in the tombs shall come forth; some to a resurrection of life, others to a resurrection of judging.

When all in their tombs hear the voice, all alike will be roused to their former state of consciousness, but none then as yet will be "living" in the spiritual sense which the text there first denotes; not even those among them who come forth to the resurrection of life, which then they have yet to receive. Until then their works are not made manifest; until then they have not yet heard and recognized the voice of The Son of God; and until then their names will not have been entered in that which is called the scroll of life, to be considered here later.

Those coming forth to a resurrection of life who will have been SEEKING "glory and honor and incorruption", not by faith but by good works, should not be mistaken for those who die in the faith and are therefore previously "roused incorruptible" (I Cor. 15:52,53). Those in John 5:29 who go out "into a resurrection of life" are not roused ALREADY incorruptible; they go out from the tombs and into a subsequent resurrection of life. The Greek EIS for "into" is the same preposition which for idiomatic reasons is sometimes rendered simply as "to" but even then, it may indicate only an approach, not an entrance; rather, direction toward an entrance. Thus, for example in John 28:3-5 where Peter and John are said to have come "to the tomb," EIS there is rendered "to," but we are distinctly told that John had NOT entered. The elder Peter running at slower speed than the youthful John was still running toward the tomb after he and John are said to have come "TO the tomb," yet John waited outside until Peter arrived before either of them entered.

While those who go out into a resurrection of life are therefore more fortunate than others roused at the same "hour," the fact remains that their works too are judged, though judged more favorably than the bad works of others. This, however, is no reason why those who are said to have done the good works should be mistaken for believers who are "roused incorruptible." It is only because of their faith that believers enjoy such a distinction over those who have done good works but die outside the faith, not having heard the evangel. The works of believers will be judged also, even as the works of others. While our Lord indicated that there are conditions under which believers would not be coming into judging (John 5:24), this does not contradict what Paul said elsewhere in Romans; that although there is "no condemnation" for those "in Christ Jesus" (8:1), yet "we all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (14:10), and elsewhere he shows that this is in order for our works to be judged "whether good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). There are certain works of believers which may have to be "burned up" while the workmen whose works they are will be saved (I Cor. 3:15). Works performed by other workmen among the believers may be judged good and for those they receive a reward (I Cor. 3:14) quite separate and distinct from God's free gift of salvation in Christ, because that is obtainable only by faith and not because of works. This is wholly consistent with a resurrection of life for some who have done good but die outside the faith, not having heard the evangel. When they are saved ahead of others whose works have been bad, it is not because of their former good works but, having been disposed to good works, they will be predisposed to receive a righteousness not their own, once it is revealed to them that this is a righteousness God has wrought for them in the Cross of Christ which they can receive only as a free gift of grace; not as reward for their past good works.

The sequence of events by which all this comes about was later revealed to John from the isle of Patmos when he in spirit had been projected down into a prophetic "day of the Lord." From there he was privileged to see a preview of that post-Millennial time we may conveniently call the White Throne Judgment. There John saw a phenomenon which now to many may appear incredible. He says he saw the dead standing. "And I perceived the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne. And scrolls were opened. And another scroll was opened which is the scroll of life. And the dead were judged by that which is written in the scrolls in accord with their acts (their works)." Here we are about to find that the scroll of life is first said to be only a "scrollet of life," though this is something we must leave to examine in a following paragraph. Meanwhile we note that the dead are to be judged by the content of other "scrolls", stated in the plural, each of which contains a record of works by the person concerned.

This accords with a symposium of former revelations showing there, the same as here, that when the unsaved dead are judged it is always the good works rather than the bad which are first taken into account. Even from the Hebrew Scriptures we learn that "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:14). Note that the good works are evaluated first, then the evil works. This coincides with our Lord's words in the passage we have quoted from John's account where we find first a resurrection of life for those who have done good and then a resurrection of judging for those who will have done evil. Likewise, in Romans we read first of those who endure in good works; afterward we read of those who are said to be "of faction, and stubborn, indeed, as to the truth, yet persuaded to injustice" (preferably, "unrighteousness"). Those who will have done good are correlated to "glory and honor and peace" while those who are "of faction" and persuaded to unrighteousness are correlated to "indignation and fury, affliction and distress".

The truth that good works rather than bad works are first to be considered in future judgments has been much obscured in Revelation chapter 20 because of incomplete rendering from the Greek. There in verse 12 of most versions we read first about "the book of life" but the Greek word rendered there as "book" is BIBLION, a diminutive of BIBLOS, so it indicates something smaller than the mis-rendered "book". The diminutive BIBLION corresponds well to what we would call a "scrollet" while BIBLOS corresponds instead to a scroll. The two words BIBLION and BIBLOS are related to each other as a smaller booklet is related to a larger book.

This notable contrast between the diminutive BIBLION as the smaller scrollet and BIBLOS as the larger scroll is of vital significance here just because the two words appear together in the same context. Elsewhere either a scroll or a scrollet, if standing alone, could indicate a book either large or small, depending on its purpose, because a physically large book could be small in one situation and a physically small book could be large in a different situation; but here where the diminutive BIBLION is followed in the same context by a greater BIBLOS it plainly indicates an increase of size to accommodate an increase in the number of names entered in what is first only a scrollet of life until it is expanded to a larger scroll adequate for additional names.

Just what does this increase imply? For believers of present and past generations we have already observed that persons such as they were saved in grace through faith by hearing the words if not also the personal voice of the Son of God. Yet in proportion to all humanity, these have been relatively few in number. It may well be true that many others who remained unbelievers have little if any excuse for not having heard; especially those who have lived in lands where the Cross of Christ has been proclaimed, be that ever so poorly. Aside from those, however, this still leaves the greater part of historic mankind who have never heard of Christ and were not within the range of His voice or the hearing of His word. Of that vast number we venture not to suggest how many or what part may have been like those Paul calls "of faction and stubborn indeed as to the truth, yet persuaded to unrighteousness;" nor how many or what part have been seeking "glory and honor and incorruption" while they were guided only by their conscience.

History appears to confirm there have been some of each kind, but God alone can know how many of those pursuing good works would have listened and believed if they had enjoyed the same opportunity as we ourselves. When future judgments are to be as Paul said, "according to my evangel," Scripture clearly indicates that the hearts of those who have been righteously disposed will be made manifest; so, will the hearts of others who have not been yielding unto the truth but yielding unto unrighteousness. Thus, we are told that "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing", even as Paul says elsewhere that when the Lord shall be coming, He will..."also illuminate the hidden things and manifest the counsels of the hearts" (I Cor. 4:5).

This is not to say that those of the unsaved who have done good and go out "into" (in the direction of) a resurrection of life will therefore realize immediate "glory and honor and peace;" nor that others who come forth to a resurrection of judging will pass directly into a "second death" for some remaining part of eonian times. Instead we are told that scrolls will be opened; which apparently means individual accounts of all past works; and the dead will be judged according to their works, whether good or bad, "by that which is written in the scrolls."

In order for this to take place, all in the tombs are roused though they are not "roused incorruptible," as Paul says elsewhere of those who die in the faith (I Cor. 15:52,53). When the unsaved dead are roused they are not yet vivified, not even those among them who will have done good. They too at first are only roused. For all alike who are roused at that far future "hour" there must be first a "revelation of the righteous judgment of God;" and for those among them who all along were righteously disposed, that will be conducive to a "resurrection of life"; a process of UP-STANDING as the Greek "anastasis" suggests, thus eventuating into "glory and honor and peace."

For others who have been "stubborn indeed as to the truth yet persuaded to unrighteousness," there will be a resurrection of judging. The text from Revelation indicates that for some this will involve what is called a "second death" of some unrevealed duration, though we know from other Scriptures that it will be restricted to eonian times. There is no Scriptural basis for concluding that this applies to all who come forth from the tombs unsaved, as if no names were added to the scrollet of life while the White Throne Judgment proceeds. Quite to the contrary, we have noted that the smaller scrollet of life in verse 12 where the reawakened dead first appear is progressively expanded, because in verse 15 before the conclusion of the judgment, the smaller scrollet has become a major scroll. The text indicates only that there will be some whose names then have not been entered in the scroll of life. Here far from saying ALL, it says rather IF ANY—"If any was not found written in the scroll of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." Still it would be unfair to contend that this implies none may incur that judgment. Another Scripture shows quite plainly there will be some who are cast into the lake of fire called "the second death" but it carefully defines those to whom it will apply in a manner which essentially excludes all others. Those to whom it will apply are characterized only as "The timid, and unbelievers, and the abominable, and murderers, and paramours, and enchanters, and idolaters, and all the false" (Rev. 21:8). There even the timid and unbelievers appear to indicate only such who have had a responsible opportunity to hear but remained as obstinate DISBELIEVERS. It is scarcely conceivable that others who have never heard of salvation in Christ yet were all along righteously disposed would share the same judgment as "murderers, and paramours, and enchanters and idolaters"—the very worse of mankind. Seeing that those who sustain a "second death" are so carefully defined, this obviously leaves a wide latitude for the many who by endurance in good works have been "seeking glory, honor and incorruption;" especially those whom Paul describes as "they of the nations (Gentiles) that have no law," who instinctively "by nature" have been doing—"that which the law demands" and were therefore "law to themselves...displaying the action of the law written in their hearts" (Rom. 2:14-15). Even according to our present unequitable systems of jurisprudence, it would be libelous indeed to characterize persons so instinctively disposed to righteousness as if they deserve to share the same judgment with willful unbelievers, murderers,

paramours, enchanters and idolaters. In the light of a revealed righteous judgment under which a scroll of life expands proportionately to contain certain names of those who go out into a resurrection of life, it becomes unworthy of responsible Scripture study to disregard this merciful provision which Scripture indicates for many who were unevangelized but righteously inclined.

Perhaps someone may ask, what manner of persons are those who have been instinctively disposed only to good works, who have sought a glory, honor and peace which always lay much beyond their reach, while others have obtained the promises of God because of faith and not because of works? It may well be that many such commendable persons have lived in every generation and in every nation. Perhaps they include some of those who lived among the 120,000 inhabitants of ancient Nineveh who repented at the preaching of Jonah but were never blessed, as we are now, to hear of salvation in Christ. Others may have lived among the doomed citizens of Tyre and Sidon. Our Lord said if the mighty works He had performed in the Galilean cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida had been done of Tyre and Sidon, they could have repented and reformed. He told the religious people of Capernaum in His day that if the works He had done in their sight had been done in Sodom, she would have remained to that very day. Accordingly, He said it will be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for many of His own people Israel (Matt. 11:20-24).

In ancient as well as modern nations no doubt many humble persons of little note have lived, served and died seeking not their own gain or pleasure but often only the needs and the rights of others. There were times too when Gentile kings of ancient nations have obeyed the voice of divine revelation. There was, for example, the Pharaoh of Joseph's day. There was Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to whom Daniel ministered. "Truly, said the king, "your God is a God of gods." There was also a Darius who wrote "to all the peoples, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth," and saying "I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel" (Dan. 6:25-26). There was a certain Artaxerxes who wrote letters of intercession to contemporary kings on behalf of Jeremiah and the exiles of Judah (Neh. 2:8). There was Cyrus of Persia, destined even before his birth to be a type of the Lord's anointed, who proclaimed freedom to the former captives from Judah and supplied them with necessary means to build a new temple at Jerusalem.

As these or untold others come forth from the tombs unto a resurrection of life, they will not be saved because of their former good works but, having been instinctively disposed to righteousness, they may well be predisposed to receive and praise God for a righteousness He has wrought in Christ on their behalf, though to them it was never before revealed. This at least would be consistent with a time when the righteous judgments of God are made manifest "in the day," as Paul says, "when God will be judging the hidden things of humanity according to my evangel through Jesus Christ."

Melvin E. Johnson (Instalment Nine, May-June 1973)

INTO A RESURRECTION OF JUDGING

This is intended to serve as Part Two of a paper which appeared in Instalment Nine, May-June 1973, "Into a Resurrection of Life." If the former paper has been loaned to someone or is otherwise no longer at hand, we would be glad to supply a replacement copy on request so that it may be reviewed as a basis for the present study.

The former paper was based on the words of our Lord in John 5:28-29 and Paul's teaching in Romans 2:5-10; first what our Lord had said of some far future "hour" when all who remain in their tombs until then will come forth together at the hearing of His voice, those having done good to "a resurrection of life" and those having done "bad" or "evil" to "a resurrection of judging." Paul accordingly refers to some who by endurance in good works have been seeking "glory and honor and incorruption." There he said nothing of faith or faith-righteousness as if he had referred to saints of the present era who are being saved in grace through faith; yet he does indicate that some who by good works have been seeking glory and honor and incorruption will somehow obtain much of what they have been seeking; not "glory and honor and incorruption" as such but "glory and honor and peace;" PEACE indeed but something less than "incorruption"—a most important distinction.

By contrast Paul refers to other and different persons who deliberately resist and reject the truth, having a desire to remain in the service of sin and receive the rations of death. Such he calls "stubborn indeed as to the truth yet persuaded to injustice" which perhaps we might better render as "persuaded to unrighteousness." He shows still further that these will suffer "indignation and fury, affliction and distress," though of course that does not deny their ultimate salvation as other Scriptures well confirm. Paul's teaching there coincides with our Lord's reference to some who will come forth to a resurrection of judging.

Then in the Book of Revelation John relates what he had seen of the White Throne Judgment as if looking back thereon from a time beyond. He saw first a scrollet, a little book, which had become a scroll, a larger book, at the conclusion of the judgment, indicating therefore that the number of names had been increasing. At the conclusion of the judging some whose names did not yet appear in the scroll were consigned to a lake of fire, associated there with "second death."

No doubt "second death" does presuppose a previous death of like kind; yet, for reasons to follow here, we suggest that this refers to the present mortal STATE of death even as the "death" which appears in John 5: 24 and I John 3: 14. There John says, "We have passed from death unto life," and the death there in view is our present mortal state. This is the "death" which began in Adam on the day he first sinned after he had been forewarned, "In the day thou eatest thereof, dying thou shalt die" or "to die shall you be dying" (Gen. 2:17). By heritage the same mortal state of death has passed through" unto all mankind (Rom. 5:12). Thus, when Paul says that our Savior Jesus Christ abolishes death yet illuminates life and incorruption (II Tim. 1:11), that life remains to be "put on" (I Cor. 15:53) and until then all mankind remains in "death." Meanwhile we by faith foresee a future incorruptible life as though it were a distant object under the radiance of a powerful light which in this instance is the light of the evangel. Later in this paper we distinguish the present mortal state of death which now applies to all from a future mortal state of death—a "second death"—which afterward will apply only to some who are then confined to a lake of fire for some indefinite future time.

Here it is most significant that Hades, the "unseen," is associated only with present death, never with "second death." For other reasons to follow here, it becomes equally interesting that present death and

Hades are found to end directly after the White Throne Judgment where the second state of death begins and continues for some until all remaining power of death has been abolished. Thus, immediately after the White Throne Judgment we observe that Death and Hades are first consigned to the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14), for those two are preceded there only by the beast and false prophet, the Adversary and his messengers, who are consigned to the same area well before the White Throne Judgment (Rev. 19:20 cf. 20:10). After that we read no more of "Hades," the "unseen" state, but we find that a diminishing effect of "second death" still remains even in the lake of fire until the last vestige of its power has been subdued. Thus, death alone—"second death" without any Hades or "unseen" state—is from then on, the last enemy in the course of "being abolished" (See I Cor. 15:26 CLNT). The present participle there indicates a continuing and progressive action until death, the last enemy, is totally abolished. The lake of fire itself is not an enemy; it is the last means employed for abolishing death, the last enemy.

Here it would be most regrettable if anyone should mistake the lake of fire for a misconceived "purgatory" or the traditional concept of "eternal torment," neither of which has any basis in Scripture. Unless the beast and false prophet are presumed to be human, no human is otherwise ever said to be tormented in the lake of fire. Only those two as well as the Adversary and his messengers are said to be tormented there, and not necessarily because of the fire. Their torment resulting from confinement, isolation and restraint may well be mental or spiritual rather than physical. Celestial messengers themselves are said to be "flames of fire" (Heb. 1:7), as though fire to them were a normal environment; yet as we are about to find concerning the sinning messengers from Noah's day, they are subject to discipline by means of confinement and restraint which may well be the only means of discipline in the lake of fire, both for humans and messengers, though for the Adversary, the beast and the false prophet it will have the further effect of "torment" (Rev. 20:10). No humans judged at the Great White Throne are ever said to be tormented in the lake of fire; nor are they said to be consumed by fire as if they might return to an unconscious state, for we find no mention of a second Hades, a second "unseen;" nor do we find any mention or any need for a second resurrection as would be required to accord with numerous Scriptures which affirm the ultimate salvation of all; neither do we find that any humans judged at the Great White Throne are ever said to remain in the lake of fire "for the eons of the eons." That is said only of the Adversary, the beast and the false prophet.

As noted in Rev. 21:8 and 22:15, it is only the most willful of sinners who are ever consigned to the lake of fire; namely such as then continue to be (at heart) "murderers and paramours and enchanters and idolaters and all the false;" some who then are still disposed to be "fabricating and fondling falsehood," though this need not include others who once may have been such as these until they afterward repented; some who then will have entered into a resurrection of life. Those in the lake of fire will be such as then insist on remaining as they were, "stubborn indeed as to the truth yet persuaded to unrighteousness.

If we have observed correctly that many at the Great White Throne may well respond quickly to the revelation of divine righteousness and thus go "into a resurrection of life," then it is only for those who still resist the truth - presumably a minor part—that any "resurrection of judging" remains. For those the lake of fire must become an environment conducive to a change of mind and heart, resulting in ultimate reconciliation; a purpose no bodily pain or instant execution would serve at all; yet it may well require an atmosphere of confinement, isolation and restraint, such as God is employing even now for the sinning messengers of Noah's day who are kept by "imperceptible bonds" in the gloomy caverns of Tartarus, as we shall observe here later.

Now as we turn further to Scripture and observe the effects of fire—not as fire is known to our present experience but as it operates UNDER DIVINE CONTROL—we find it may well serve a beneficent purpose even to earthly life. We are reminded first how God once appeared to Moses as flames of fire in a burning bush (Ex. 3). He announced Himself as the God of Abraham and went on to talk with Moses out

of the flames. We read that "the bush burned with fire" but strangely it was not consumed. Presumably it was not even injured! There perhaps it is not so strange that God should speak to Moses from flames of fire, for according to Scripture God Himself IS a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29) though His presence with Moses indicates He does not always CONSUME; yet to note that fire, divinely controlled, can be harmless even to earthly life, this appears strange to our present experience, though it becomes both enlightening and reassuring.

We are further reminded how God, as Jehovah, went before Israel at night in a pillar of fire "to give them light" on their journey in the wilderness which exemplifies another beneficent use of fire under divine control. Moreover, God speaks through the prophet to a future generation of Israel: "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. 43:2).

From the book of Daniel, we read of a time when three of his associates—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—were cast bodily into a burning fiery furnace where they were joined also by a celestial messenger in human form. The four remained unharmed in a furnace so hot that the flames slew even the men outside. Yet to the four in the furnace the fire had no power on their bodies nor even on their clothing, "nor was a hair of their head singed nor the smell of fire had passed upon them" (Daniel 3). In our present era of grace while supernatural powers are wisely held in suspense so that we may walk by faith, not by sight, and thus obtain a greater blessing, it seems that amazing incidents like these are subconsciously downgraded as if they were nothing more than visions or dreams, yet according to Scripture we know they were FACTS. Obviously, the operation of divine power to control the effects of fire is no more restrained in a fiery lake than in a torrid fiery furnace, though of course for widely different objectives.

We have only meager information concerning the procedure of judging at the Great White Throne and the manner of chastening or discipline in the lake of fire; even less than we are told about other judgments. Whatever is revealed about any judgment may improve our understanding of others, so we turn here to consider what Scripture reveals about one or two judgments other than the one at the Great White Throne.

One such future judgment is related to the present restraint and isolation of the sinning messengers from celestial realms who came to earth in antediluvian days and took themselves wives from the daughters of men as recorded in Genesis 6. Both Peter and Jude have something to say about these. Jude says they kept not their own sovereignty but left their own habitation and are now being kept in "imperceptible bonds under gloom for the judging of the great day" (Jude 6). Peter tells us more exactly that they were thrust into the gloomy caverns of Tartarus where he says they are kept for "chastening judging" (II Pet. 2:4,5) and in that connection, he applies some manner of remedial "chastening" also to humans as well as messengers, for he says the Lord knoweth how to keep "the unjust (unrighteous) for chastening in the day of judging" (II Pet. 2:6-10).

From the original Greek text for Jude's epistle it appears as if those "imperceptible bonds" are somehow concealed or "unperceived" by reason of the gloom. There is a possible hint in this that gloom or darkness has much to do with the present restraint and confinement of those messengers in the gloomy caverns of Tartarus where they are being kept for future judging.

Elsewhere Peter refers to the same messengers as "spirits in jail" and "those once stubborn" (the original text indicates they were "unpersuadable") when the patience of God waited in the days before the flood until Noah had completed the ark (I Pet. 3:19-20). Since they are shown to be confined as "spirits in jail," this suggests the probability that their former earthly bodies had been dematerialized, so they could escape the flood while Noah and his family were being saved by means of the ark, yet the messenger were prevented from returning to celestial realms.

In that connection Peter tells us also, what no one else does, that our Lord went to visit these sinning messengers in "jail" or "prison" after His resurrection, which incidentally was after all authority in heaven and on earth had been restored to Him (Matt. 28:18). What a strange coincidence that a Judge of such magnitude should visit prisoners with their degree of obvious guilt so long before their trial! We are not told what manner of message He brought to them. Peter says only "He heralds." It would seem that His presence alone should have been more than eloquent. Whereas they had left their own habitation and came to earth only to sin, here they were confronted by One who had preceded them all as the one and only "resplendent morning star" (Rev. 22:17) and He had left His preeminent glory to enter the prison house of death here upon the earth through the lowly means of human birth rather to seek and save both men and messengers, including even themselves! In His immediate presence it would seem they should scarcely need any reminder of this.

We are not told if those messengers will remain "unpersuadable" and unrepentant until "the judging of the great day" as Jude calls it. In that case they apparently would be included among those who will be consigned to the lake of fire with the Adversary and his messengers. For them that would be, as Peter says, "chastening judging," though we are not told the duration of their chastening. For the Adversary, the beast and the false prophet, but for no others, it is said to be "torment" for the "eons of the eons" (Rev. 20:10).

A different judgment which may indirectly assist our understanding of others is the one which occurs when the Son of Mankind with all His holy messengers is to come in His glory as related in Matt. 25:31-46. That will be at the beginning of a forthcoming Millennium whereas the White Throne Judgment is, of course, post-Millennial. At the earlier judgment when the Son of Mankind comes in His glory we find no mention of any resurrections, but there will be persons of the generation then living who have been charitable to our Lord's brethren from Israel at a time when they have suffered much adversity from the Gentiles. Conversely, there will be others who then have shown no mercy. Therefore, there will be those whom our Lord separates then to His right hand of favor and to them He tenders the blessings of a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Others who meanwhile have been uncharitable are sent away to "the fire eonian made ready for the Adversary and his messengers" and "into chastening eonian."

Since we note from this that some are sent away into the same fire as is prepared for the Adversary and his messengers, this cannot occur until after the Millennium, for it is not until then that the Adversary himself is consigned to the lake of fire where he is preceded only by the beast and the false prophet (Rev. 20:10 cf. 19:20). No others are said to be consigned to the lake of fire until after the White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:15). For them, as Peter also reminds us, that will be a "day of judging" and of "chastening" (he does not say torment). See II Pet.2:4-10.

That occurs in the same context where Peter first refers to the sinning messengers of Noah's day and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah whose former inhabitants can next appear only at the Great White Throne. In a manner like unto the sinning messengers and the inhabitants of ancient Sodom, Peter shows that other unrighteous ones are being kept for "chastening" in a "day of judging;" a judging therefore which is characterized by chastening. Present participles both for "judging" and "chastening" indicate a progressive action, a process.

Here we press the point that "chastening" essentially requires a conscious state—else there could be no chastening—and the need for remedial chastening is the only explainable reason why some are consigned to the lake of fire directly after the White Throne Judgment; those who then are not yet named in the scroll of life while others coming forth from the tombs at the same "hour" will have entered "into a resurrection of life." Those not named in the scroll of life are then obviously still unrighteous only

because they remain impenitent, and for this they require not torment but "chastening," even in a lake at fire. Fear of torment might well elicit a strained confession yet no repentance of heart and mind.

We have no cause to assume that fire UNDER DIVINE CONTROL is ever a torment to any human, because as previously shown here, this is something the Scriptures do not confirm. Yet neither could there be any "chastening" if persons consigned to a lake of fire were instantly consumed as is often supposed. Thus, for unrepenting hearts and minds there is chastening indeed but REMEDIAL chastening, conducive to sound and sober reconsideration—such "Godly sorrow" as Paul says is producing repentance "for unregretted salvation" (II Cor. 7:10). Under such remedial chastening no feigned repentance could go unperceived, for we are reminded that the Lord "will also illuminate the hidden things of darkness and manifest the counsels of the hearts" (I Cor. 4:5).

In the previous paper of Instalment Nine—"Into a Resurrection of Life"—we observed there are those who come forth to a resurrection of life while others at the same time come forth to a resurrection of judging. We observed also that the distinction between those two kinds is determined after the little scroll has somehow expanded in volume to become a larger scroll—the "scroll of life." By that time, it includes the names of some but not of all who then have appeared before the Great White Throne. We find a clear indication that there will be others whose names are not found written in the scroll of life, for we read: "If any was not found written in the scroll of life, he was cast into the lake of fire," but not until Death and Hades are first consigned to that area. Thereupon we read no more of Hades. Since there is no mention of a second Hades, we cannot infer that there is any second "unseen" or unconscious state associated with what is called "the second death." Thus, we conclude that this becomes a second conscious state of dying like unto the present mortal state, though it does not terminate with a second tenure in the tomb, as does the present state of dying, for it has no identity with Hades, the "unseen" state. The second state of dying therefore must terminate in LIFE.

As we have observed here also from a previous judgment when the Son of Mankind comes in His glory, the lake of fire is the same as the fire said to be prepared for the Adversary and his messengers which for some becomes a means of eonian chastening—a chastening which then, the same as now, has but one purpose ••• to work out "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11). We suggest therefore that for some the present mortal state of dying will end and a second mortal state of dying will begin at the conclusion of the White Throne Judgment and thereupon they will experience remedial chastening in the lake of fire.

We pause here to consider the reason for that distinction; why there must be a "second death" if it becomes in fact a further state of mortality, like unto the present, until all have passed from death unto life: some by means of "chastening eonian."

Scripture elsewhere indicates that there is to be a time when there is no longer a sacrifice concerned with sins resulting from a willful refusal of openly revealed truth; when truth becomes so manifest that the acceptance thereof requires no faith. That future state of individual responsibility is described as trampling on the Son of God, deeming the blood of the covenant contaminating and outraging the spirit of grace (Heb. 10:26-31). This suggests a time and condition when such deliberate contempt for God's revealed righteousness in Christ can be no longer attributed to Adam's first sin and its racial consequence, for then it becomes a knowledgeable choice of each individual. To some lesser degree the same principle of justice will apply to a future generation of Israel under a new covenant in a forthcoming eon, previous to the White Throne Judgment. Thus, the prophet Ezekiel foresaw a time when the ancient proverb will no longer apply: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezek. 18:2). Each one even then is shown to be largely responsible for his own acts or intentions, the motives of his own heart and mind. Later in the brilliant light of the Great White Throne this individual

responsibility becomes unconditional. When others then have come forth from the tombs unsaved to observe and obtain a deliverance equally available to all, the former plea of racial and hereditary depravity can no longer serve as acceptable defense for those who will remain "stubborn indeed as to the truth yet persuaded to unrighteousness.

Thus, after many enter into a resurrection of life—an UP-STANDING process as the Greek ANASTASIS denotes there are some who enter into a resurrection of judging which for them becomes eonian chastening of some indefinite duration in the lake of fire; whatever may be needful for their deliverance from the power of sin. For them that remains a second mortal state of dying until it terminates in life after this chastening has worked out "the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

It is true of course that this is not an evangel for today. Judgments in themselves are not an evangel at any time. They are concerned rather with God's righteous indignation against all the unrighteousness both of messengers and men. Yet a knowledge of God's judgments may well prepare the heart better to receive and honor His righteousness in Christ. Consequently, what the Scriptures do reveal about future judgments is useful also "for this teaching of ours," not less now than it was in Paul's day. His first two chapters of Romans and much of the third are concerned largely with human unrighteousness and those who dishonor the truth by means of irreverence as well as unrighteousness. Thus, when Paul envisioned that faraway day when God will be judging the hidden things of humanity, he said it would be "according to my evangel" (Rom. 2:16). God's judgments, therefore, as well as His evangel are well IN ACCORD with His purpose of the eons which He makes in Christ Jesus our Lord, as also proclaimed by Paul.

Though all God's judgments against sin are severe, they are tempered with mercy; those also at the Great White Throne. There the same as elsewhere it is the good works rather than the bad which are first taken into account (Ezek. 12:14; John 5:29; Rom. 2:7-10). Even for the most obstinate sinners consigned and restricted to the lake of fire, all judgments even then are remedial rather than vindictive. As such they serve only to destroy the power of sin, the sting of death, yet meanwhile they save the sinner. "By the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning" we read that "He shall wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purge the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof" (Isa. 4:4). "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Mal. 3:3). "He shall bring forth judgment unto truth" (Isa. 42:3).

As we consider these numerous judgments for the many who were never blest with God's evangel concerning His son as we are now, and especially those who by good works have sought for glory and honor and incorruption which no human works can ever deserve or obtain on personal merit, then how richly blest are those of us to whom God has dealt some measure of faith whereby we may apprehend something of the riches of His grace in this present era, so that in the eons to come He should be displaying the transcendent riches of His grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. To Him be all the glory in the ecclesia and in Christ Jesus for all the generations of the eon of the eons! Amen!

Melvin E. Johnson (Instalment Eleven, November-December 1973)

NOT AS YET IS THE CONSUMMATION

"You shall be about to be hearing battles, and tidings of battles. See that you are not alarmed, for it must be occurring, but not as yet is the consummation" (Matt. 24:6 CLNT). To some of our readers the last clause in this passage will be better known from the King James Version: "THE END IS NOT YET." It is the beginning of our Lord's answer to His disciples who had asked Him privately, "What is the sign of Thy presence and of the conclusion of the eon?"

Especially for the benefit of readers who perhaps only recently learned of this magazine we intend now to consider some major implications of the prophecy in Matthew 24 which otherwise are often overlooked. Since it closely resembles much which has occurred and reoccurred many times in the past, it has been frequently misunderstood and misapplied. Premature applications have led to many grievous disappointments, so until our understanding of the prophecy is placed in perspective according to Scripture, there are apt to be more of such disappointments. (NOTE: For much of what follows here we are largely indebted to the diligent labors of the late Commander J. G. H. Steedman of England.)

Today as in former generations there are many disturbing events which result in much fear, suffering, anxiety and distress. These like earlier events of the same kind are again easily mistaken for conditions our Lord foresaw and foretold to be signs of His presence near the conclusion of this eon, a time preceding His subsequent manifestation. Here we do not seek to discount any of the present causes for world-wide alarm and unrest; the dark specter of famine in many lands the ominous rise of terror, lawlessness and crime; the lingering peril of imminent nuclear destruction, the mortal fear that new wars could break out at any moment to take on global dimensions; even the increasing frequency of earthquakes which prophecy shows is yet to culminate in a seismic convulsion more terrible than anything previous in all human history. We are not unmindful that for many years powerful nations, fearing each other, have channeled much of their natural wealth, their energy and manpower, into enormous stockpiles of weapons and armaments at burdensome cost, paying for this largely by the printing of greatly inflated or devaluated currencies which necessarily can buy only less and increasingly less of daily necessities such as food, clothing and shelter. Yet very reasonable as it seems that the end of this age must be very near, there are sound Scriptural reasons why this is not true. The main reason is that there is much Hebrew prophecy yet to be fulfilled before a future Millennium.

Here it is well first to pause and consider that in Matthew 24 our Lord was speaking privately to His disciples from Israel. It was about forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem and their cherished temple, an event then impending which our Lord had mentioned first in verse two of this subject chapter. Still most of His reply was in answer to the question as to what would be the signs of His presence and the end of this age. His answer to The Twelve has been preserved for future Israelites, especially for some who will be living at a time far beyond our present day and long after Israel then has been reconstituted as a covenant nation like they once were from the time of Moses onward. Prophecy shows that future ones in Israel are to endure much affliction—violent death for some of them—and in verse 15 their attention is alerted especially to a certain sign from the prophecy of Daniel; an "abomination of desolation" standing in the holy place of Israel's future temple. Paul associates this with the man of lawlessness who is yet to appear, though not until future generations of Israel have been long restored to covenant favor and blessed with a time of undisturbed peace, health and prosperity which they will enjoy as long as they remain faithful to Ieue (Jehovah) their covenant God. We are told, however, that Israel in time will apostatize again by a new "falling away" as this is called in the King James Version (II Thess. 2:3).

Here it becomes quite obvious that there can be no apostasy—no "falling away" as such—while Israel now remains as aliens to the covenant God made with their fathers, because now they have nothing to fall away from. Consequently, there can be no such foretold apostasy till well after they have been reconstituted as a covenant nation; not until after some indefinite future time when they again will become unfaithful, as Scripture shows they will toward the close of a future pre-Millennial era. Long before that, as we learn from Ezekiel's prophecy, Israel is to build a new temple where a future Levitical priesthood will serve once again as former Levities did under the law, and that will continue for a time of unrevealed duration until their new sanctuary is invaded and occupied by a man of lawlessness who will seize upon that opportunity just because Israel then has once more "fallen away." That will result in the abomination of desolation as foretold in Daniel to which our Lord pointed in Matt. 24:15.

From what we have just now observed it is evident that our Lord's prophecy in Matthew 24 contains some very significant implications which are not always adequately considered. This necessarily requires an extensive pre-Millennial era because it calls for the fulfilment of much Hebrew prophecy never fulfilled in the past and which cannot be deferred to a future Millennium. Scripture plainly shows there is first to be a providentially motivated exodus of Israel's descendants from among all nations, followed by a judgment in a foretold "wilderness" (Ezek. 20:35), so very remindful of the judgment in ancient Sinai. Israel is to be restored as a covenant nation to reoccupy the land of their fathers, but this must not be mistaken for anything the present generation may be doing now in their own power as aliens to the covenant God made with their fathers. Scripture shows that the land which a newly restored covenant nation is yet to occupy in fulfilment of prophecy is a land which then only recently has been reduced to total desolation with its cities in ruin; a land which other people of that day will have seen lying desolate and waste until it is afterward restored to unprecedented fertility and prosperity by a then newly reconstituted covenant nation, (Ezek. 36:35,36).

To accomplish all this, we are told that the descendants of Israel will be providentially assembled and extracted from all nations by an exodus like unto their deliverance from Egypt at the time of Moses but in vastly greater dimensions. All this the reader may verify from such passages as Ezek. 20:33-42 and 36:17-18 together with Jer. 23:7-8, Jer. 16:14-16, Jer. 32:37-44 and Isa. 11:11. (To spare the need of extending this paper to prohibitive length, the content of such passage as just cited will not be reproduced here. We assume interested readers will turn to these in their own Scriptures).

Yet here we are not to assume that a nation so suddenly called out and restored to covenant favor will be instantly worshiping their God in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, no more so than their fathers did in the days of Moses. God is not then as yet revealed to them by the name He is known to us. Israel will know Him then, as their fathers did also, by the name of Iene (Jehovah), their covenant God, but as long as they remain faithful according to the knowledge they first receive, they will be bountifully blessed in the yield of their land and the labor of their hands. This in turn will have a salutary effect on contemporary nations of the Gentiles and they will voluntarily come to the aid of Israel in her reconstruction work, remindful of days when Hiram, king of Tyre, supplied Solomon with cedars from Lebanon to build that former temple or when Cyrus of Persia strengthened the hands of Judah and Benjamin to rebuild their temple after the Babylonian servitude. Another Hebrew prophet foresaw a then distant day when former Gentile enemies of Jerusalem, represented there as hostile "horns," will surprisingly turn into "carpenters" and help Israel to rebuild (Zech. 1:16-21). Thus, will it be when the Lord once again turns back the captivity of Zion (Psa. 126). "In those days," we read, "it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all the languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, 'We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'" (Zach. 8:23).

There is to be a time yet future—which necessarily becomes a pre-Millennial time—when Egypt and Assyria, two of Israel's ancient and relentless oppressors, are to be blessed jointly with Israel, and when

they as three friendly nations will be faithful to the Lord, so the three of them will be equally blessed because of Israel (see Isa. 19:24-25). This is not to be mistaken for a subsequent Millennial time when Egypt as a nation has reverted to her former hostile ways after Israel's apostasy. Then we are reminded that Egypt will need the discipline of threatened drouth by the withholding of rain so she will be **CONSTRAINED** to come up and keep the feast of tabernacles at Jerusalem (Zech. 14:17-18). The reason for this is quite apparent. Egypt and other hostile nations who then first have been friendly to Israel until she begins to apostasize will turn hostile again and they will contribute to Zion's last affliction, but for this they will bear the consequences of Millennial judgments after God in His mercy has delivered Israel as a nation then born in one day (Zech. 3:9). Still it is Israel, the favored nation of prophetic destiny, who will first degenerate into apostasy and thus lose the good will she enjoy for a time from friendly nations in the earlier part of a pre-Millennial era, future to our own day.

On the other hand, it should be equally obvious that all this requires time. A "nation so blessed does not apostatize abruptly, or all at once, so as to find her sacred temple suddenly occupied and desecrated by "the man of lawlessness" and "the abomination of desolation" mentioned in Daniel. The Scriptural record of Israel's past performance, faithless as she often was in ancient times, is abundant proof of our God's longsuffering with a rebellious people. Israel's apostasy, in the future as in the past, will develop most reasonably over a span of time as the moral fiber of the nation ebbs lower through successive generations, but there finally comes a time when God gives them over for a season to suffer the consequences of their unfaithful ways.

Still those who become involved in Israel's future apostasy are somewhat less than the whole nation. Other prophecy shows there is to be a certain first fruit from among them; a faithful remnant who will suffer persecution at the hands of their own brethren, and it is just because of these that the nation at large will be delivered from her last great affliction in the day of the Lord when He, at long last, shall arrive to deliver His people, the nation from whom He was born in the flesh (Joel 2:32).

In Isaiah's prophecy the separation of this faithful remnant appears as a "male child" born from Zion, the mother, before she afterward travails with the birth of her many children, the whole remaining nation (Isa. 66:7-8). In two preceding verses there we are told that the faithful remnant will be severed from the nation "on account of My name," showing that by then they as a firstfruit out of Israel will come to recognize that Ieue, their covenant God, is, indeed, none other than Jesus Christ, our Lord, whom their fathers once caused to be crucified. "Hear the word of Ieue, ye who tremble at His word. Say to your brethren, who are hating you, Who are isolating you **ON ACCOUNT OF MY NAME** (and saying) 'Ieue will be glorified.' Yet He will appear to your rejoicing, and they shall be ashamed" (Isa. 66:5-6). This coincides with a similar account of the same phenomena in Revelation chapter 12. There in verse five we are told that those who will constitute the "male child" are to be shepherding or ruling all the nations with an iron club, a power they are to exercise eventually in the subsequent Millennial age. The same promise reappears in Rev. 2:27 as one of seven promises to the "conquerors" out of all seven ecclesias in Asia Minor. There we are told quite clearly why the faithful remnant will have been cast out by the nation at large from their city and temple to be found afterward as exiles in Asia Minor. To those in Philadelphia our Lord says it plainly, "You do not disown my Name," much like the prophet Isaiah had said; "Your brethren who hate you, who are **ISOLATING YOU ON ACCOUNT OF MY NAME**" (Isa. 66:5). To those in Smyrna also our Lord identifies Himself as He "who became dead and lives" (Rev. 2:8).

Now if we reconsider the prophecy of Matthew 24 in its logical relation to the future course of events which are predetermined on Israel, its intended application becomes apparent. To alert the faithful remnant against bold deceptions of that future day our Lord begins with an ominous warning, "Beware that no one should be deceiving you. For many shall be coming in My name saying, "I am the Christ" (Matt. 24:4,5). Then He continues "You shall be about to be hearing battles, and tidings of battles." This

clearly implies a preceding time of sustained world peace, for otherwise battles and tidings of battles would become nothing new to serve as a sign of our Lord's presence in advance of His ultimate revelation then impending.

We have observed here in the foregoing that after the descendants of Israel are extracted from the Gentile nations by a divinely motivated exodus to reoccupy the land of their fathers, they will enjoy the good will and voluntary cooperation of contemporary nations as long as they remain faithful and obedient to their covenant God, but afterward when they yield to apostasy, as we are told that they will, the reverse of all this will come to pass. Gentile nations will turn hostile to Israel and to each other. Israel then becomes the focal point of world animosity, even as our Lord said also, "You shall be hated by all nations because of My name." It is then also that the faithful remnant will suffer most severely at the hands of their brethren while the nation will suffer at the hands of the Gentiles. Battles and tidings of battles are then to be heard from many sources just as our Lord's prophecy indicates so well. Furthermore, drouth-stricken lands will suffer the consequences of world-wide famine, disease and pestilence. The frequency and intensity of earthquakes will increase. All these evils will gather momentum and move along swiftly on a tide of international intrigue and political deception which enthrone the man of lawlessness and establishes the "abomination of desolation" in the holy place of Israel's temple.

Still in the early stages of this abrupt reversal from a long preceding era of peace among the nations we may well infer that men of the unbelieving world will pay but little heed until each one personally is directly affected. By that time any remaining knowledge of present world-wide distress will seem remote to them, much like we now may look upon events of the distant past which no longer affect us directly. We are reminded it will be then as in the days when the deluge was approaching. Men were heedless of Noah's warning. "Thus," we are told, "shall be the presence of the Son of Mankind." That will be what Peter called "the last days" When "scoffers will be coming...going according to their own desires and saying, "Where is the promise of His presence? For since the fathers were put to repose, all is continuing thus from the beginning of creation" (II Pet. 3:3-4). still as we have now observed more closely, these ultimate signs of our Lord's presence cannot appear until they must follow a preceding time of sustained world peace because of divine blessing on Israel and on other nations because of Israel.

Something which was little if at all recognized until a few years ago—and was observed then only by relatively few—is that the greater part of Hebrew prophecy not fulfilled in the past still remains to be fulfilled BEFORE the Millennium. This may be demonstrated by the prophecy which comprises the Book of Revelation. While it is found in the Greek Scriptures, the whole substance of that little book is nonetheless Hebrew prophecy just as if it were found in what is commonly called the Old Testament. From a total of 22 chapters (all relating to the future and none to the past) nineteen of those chapters are pre-Millennial. Only one chapter, the 20th, deals with the thousand years that follow, while the last two chapters relate to the new heavens and new earth of a post-Millennial era. John who received the Revelation had been projected in spirit down into the future Day of the Lord (1:10) preceding the Millennium, so from that position he says, "I turned about to look for the voice which spoke with me" (1:12)). Thus, he saw everything pre-Millennial in retrospect as if it had occurred already yet many centuries before it would come to pass. Much Hebrew prophecy which belongs to the future is reflected in that compact little book, notably the calling and sealing of the "firstfruit" from the Twelve Tribes who will constitute the faithful remnant of Joel 2:32; and, as we have seen here, it is because of these that the nation at large will be delivered from her last great affliction caused by her own apostasy.

Now this becomes significant just because Revelation has strangely nothing to say about the earlier part of a presently forthcoming pre-Millennial era which may well be the greater part and of longest duration. We find nothing in Revelation about Israel's exodus from all nations, their subsequent judgment in some prophetic "wilderness," such as we have noted from earlier prophecy in the Hebrew Scriptures, nor does

Revelation mention Israel's providential occupation of the promised land followed by the construction of new cities and a new temple. All this which necessarily precedes the severance of the faithful remnant coincident with Israel's apostasy is not reflected at all in the book of Revelation. As Commander Steedman once reminded me in one of his latest letters, all this earlier part of Israel's pre-Millennial experience is essentially presupposed or just taken for granted in the book of Revelation as something it clearly implies but does not relate. This would indicate that Revelation intentionally covers only the latter part—possibly even the lesser part—of the pre-Millennial era yet to come. Still the part it does cover is not necessarily brief which is indicated, for example, by something we find in the letter to Ephesus, one of the seven future ecclesias in Asia Minor. They are first commended for their former works, their labor of love and patience, but afterward (and conceivably quite long afterward) they are admonished to "remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." This is very suggestive of the pristine zeal which is so often characteristic of some new or young ecclesia until in the course of time the initial fervor has slowly ebbed away and there is need for a call to revival.

After the seven letters to the seven ecclesias in chapters two and three, all that follows in the Revelation prophecy may be summarized here only very briefly. First comes the opening of seven "seals" at seven successive intervals. These become something like previews of the same adversities as our Lord foretold. As we compare the opening of the first seal with Matthew 24:4-5, the likeness we may look for becomes very obscure yet very real. Here we are to expect something subtle and delicately deceptive about the one seated on a white horse and holding only a bow (apparently not also an arrow). The "wreath" he receives is for fraudulent conquest, coinciding exactly with our Lord's first warning, "Beware that no one shall be deceiving you, for many shall come in My name saying, 'I am the Christ.'" When the second seal is opened we see a rider on a red horse bearing a sword who takes peace from the earth (6:3-4) which is instantly remindful of "battles and tidings of battles." As the third and fourth seals are opened, a careful rationing of food and resulting famines are plainly the famines of Matt. 24:8. The great earthquake after the sixth seal is opened corresponds exactly to "quakes in places" which our Lord also mentioned. Thus, false Christs, wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes are features shared in common by the seals of Revelation and Matthew 24.

After the seven seals we have the sounding of seven trumpets by seven successive messengers, each trumpet blast followed by some new phenomena of progressive judgment: thereupon seven further messengers with "vials" or "bowls" containing the last dregs from the wrath or fury of God to be poured out upon the nations. All this converges on a sudden and utter destruction of Babylon, a great city of evil design which is yet to be built on some unrevealed site; most conceivably where ancient Babylon once stood. All this and more (the judgment of the beast and false prophet also) must yet occur in the latter part of a now impending pre-Millennial era before the Adversary is restrained for a thousand years coincident with Israel's eventual deliverance in the Day of the Lord.

In conclusion here, perhaps we should pause to consider just how the future rise and fall, and ultimate deliverance of Israel may relate to our own expectations. Until or unless we are graced to observe that these revelations have no DELAYING effect whatever on the realization of our present hope, the necessary readjustment of understanding may become momentarily painful though there is no valid reason why it should. Today, no less than in Paul's time, our comfort rests in the solid assurance that even now as the night progresses the day is near (Rom. 13:13). We already have "the earnest of the enjoyment of our allotment" so we are to confidently await the "deliverance of that which has been procured" (Eph. 1:14). Our hope and destiny are in no way contingent on the fulfilment of Hebrew prophecy for Israel. Our blessings are found primarily in Paul's revelations for this present secret economy. While we are to walk by faith and not by perception, this after all is the highest quality of faith consistent with the highest plane of spiritual blessings among the celestials in Christ.

What becomes most useful for us to remember here is that the element of time which intervenes between the realization of our present hope and the beginning of Israel's national restoration to divine favor is something Scripture nowhere reveals nor is it needful for us to know. It is our conviction that the deliverance we are awaiting must precede anything which signals the beginning of Israel's renaissance, but we are not told how much the one may precede the other. What we should never do is misappropriate any part of Hebrew prophecy bearing on Israel's eventual deliverance, such as Matthew 24, and then assume mistakenly that our deliverance is somehow determined by theirs—or theirs by ours. It is enough for us to know that each of these will have its respective part in attaining the purpose of "the One Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will."

Melvin E. Johnson (Treasures of Truth, Instalment Seventeen, May-June 1975)

STRATAGEMS OF THE ADVERSARY

To assume that everything spiritual or supernatural is therefore good and wrought of God is a common and most grievous mistake. We live in a time when many alleged miracles are displayed out of season and supported by Scriptures misapplied to times and conditions where they do not belong. This is a means by which the Adversary seeks to misrepresent the truth and subvert the faith of many. In our day he often fares much better than he did on that notable occasion when he confronted our Lord with a Scripture accurately quoted but misapplied: "Cast Thyself down from hence, for it is written, 'He shall give His angels charge over Thee to keep Thee'" (Luke 4:9-10). Satan had dared our Lord to prematurely appropriate a Scripture out of season, but this evil attempt of the Adversary was parried with another Scripture correctly applied: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Another frequent mistake is to assume that the Adversary would be using only evil means to serve His evil purpose, so on that assumption he would not be using and proclaiming the Word of God, yet we are well forewarned that he transforms himself to appear as a messenger of light and for this he misuses the Scriptures. Our Lord reminds us that "from the beginning" Satan abode not in the truth ...for he is a liar" (John 8:44): yet the deadliest of his lies are disguised as if they were truth by a misuse of the sacred Word; and the present misuse of Scripture is often some truth pertaining to a previous time which in a future era will be truth again, but for now it becomes the worst of error.

Today the practice of supernatural signs or miracles out of season is often mistaken as if these were wrought of God. Satan is well able to deceive the unsuspecting through victims he himself has first deceived, yet for those of us who are aware of this there is need for caution lest we condemn ourselves by misjudging some who are not themselves the source of the evil which they serve. Unless one is very careful, there is a tendency to mistake the victim as if he were the principal back of the scenes. We are reminded that our warfare is not with the victim, not "with blood and flesh but with the sovereignties, with the authorities, with the world-mights of this darkness, with the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials" (Eph. 6:12 CLNT). Thus, Paul entreats us also that we "must not be fighting, but be gentle toward all, apt to teach, bearing with evil, with meekness training those who are antagonizing, seeing whether God may be giving them repentance to come into a realization of the truth ... sobering up out of the trap of the Adversary, having been caught alive by him, for that one's will"(II Tim. 2:25,26).

An ingenious mode of deception employed by the Adversary nowadays is to associate his own misuse of Scripture with vigorous campaigns against many present prevailing evils, including much that the Word of God itself condemns. Many have assumed mistakenly that Satan is always opposed to good and disposed to evil as if he takes delight in wars, Violence, Vice, poverty, drugs and disease. While such evils are the fruitage of his own original lie, we should also remember he is the god of this wicked eon (II Cor. 4:4; Gal. 1:4) wherein he has a limited lease of spiritual power, so we may scarcely assume that he enjoys seeing his dominion in peril of falling apart. He will in fact yet succeed, though only for some temporary time, to display a deceiving likeness of "peace and security" (I Thess. 5.3) shortly before he is to be restrained for a thousand years.

The stratagems of the Adversary are so resourceful and subtle that we of ourselves could not even begin to cope with them, nor could we so much as faintly foresee by what means he will next go about to deceive. This may be why the record of some of his former exploits is preserved in Scripture so that we

may learn from these how he may operate in other devious yet similar ways at the present time and in days to come.

In Egypt at the time of Moses the Adversary enabled the magicians of Pharaoh to duplicate some of the supernatural signs whereby Jehovah displayed His own power through Moses and Aaron. When Aaron had cast his rod upon the ground and it became a serpent, the magicians did likewise and their rods, became serpents too, but we read that "Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods," showing that whatever temporary evil God permits for some good and wise purpose of His own He is well able to restrain when that purpose is served. We learn from this also that Satan is endued with much power to deceive by supernatural means through human agencies disguised as if they were commissioned of God. Later when Moses was told how he and Aaron should use the same rod as before, now to signify that the waters of Egypt would be turned into blood, this also came to pass, and the magicians of Egypt did likewise. They succeeded even in duplicating a further plague when God had signified through Moses and Aaron that the land would be molested with frogs, but afterward the magicians were unable to duplicate any of the following plagues which God continued to inflict on Egypt through Moses and Aaron.

Now when Paul informs us that the names of Pharaoh's magicians were Jannes and Jambres, he indicates also that what they did in Egypt is closely analogous to methods employed by other deceivers from apostolic days onward, for the purpose, as he said, of "withstanding the truth" (II Tim. 3:8). Yet today Satan employs even bolder means than those he used through Jannes and Jambres, for now he is apparently aware that God foregoes the use of supernatural signs in this present era while we are to walk by faith, "not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7). This affords the Adversary a rare opportunity to deceive by displaying supernatural signs out of season, exhibiting these to unsuspecting eyes as if they were powers wrought of God. Since these are things a true exponent of the Word would not be doing now, it serves to discredit that which is true and authenticate that which is false. Here is where many fail to heed Paul's serious warning that Satan operates through human mediums "with all power and signs and false miracles, and with every seduction of injustice" (II Thess. 2:8-10). Many therefore are "deceiving and being deceived" (II Tim. 3:13). Some can be so unwittingly persuaded by such apparent wonders as to suddenly forget our Lord's solemn warning when His disciples had asked for a sign of His future presence. "Beware" He began, "Beware that no one should be deceiving you for many shall come in my name....false Christs and false prophets, and they shall be giving great signs and miracles to deceive, if possible, even the chosen" (Matt. 24: 4,5,23,24).

In the person of Balaam—a prophet outside of Israel—the Adversary found a convenient medium through which to work his evil designs, for although Balaam prophesied exactly as he was commanded of God, purely in accord with the Word of God, what he DID afterward was exactly as he was persuaded of Satan in causing Israel to stumble and disobey. We read that he "loved the wages of unrighteousness" (II Pet. 2:15-16), and such wages today are not necessarily those of monetary gain; they can be also some spiritual reward, more subtle and deceiving (Numbers 22,23,24,25; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14).

Since Elijah was to typify a special preparatory work of God just before our Lord returns to Israel (Mal. 4:5), the false prophets of Baal in his day did not prevail as they do on other occasions. They prayed in vain for their god to consume the bullock they had offered on the altar, but when Elijah had offered his own bullock and prayed to the God of Israel, that offering was suddenly consumed by fire from heaven (I Kings 18:25-39). Yet Satan is not always so easily defeated. What the evil prophets of Baal in Elijah's day were unable to do, a future false prophet will do with vengeance ...to all the world's amazement and delight. He will bring down fire from heaven in the sight of men and he will work miracles of dazzling deception (Rev. 13:13,14; 19:20). Some future king represented by one of the seven heads on the beast (Rev. 13:3) will be wounded as it were to death. We are told his deadly wound will be healed, which is only one of many miracles Satan will perform through human mediums in days to come. Whether that

stated "wound" will be fatal or not and whether the healing will be true or false, the important fact remains that all the world will believe it and will be deceived as if it were a miracle wrought of God, for we read, "All the world wondered after the beast" (Rev. 13:3, 19:20).

The saints of Israel in that day are well forewarned of such deceptions, but even some among them are to be deceived. Today we are alerted to a different and closely related peril. We are cautioned by Paul that there will be signs and miracles to designed to deceive us also; especially if our interest in a former quiet study of the Word begins to wane and we are attracted to a wider fellowship of strange manifestations and popular appeal. "The era will be," Paul said, "when they will not tolerate sound teaching but, their hearing being tickled, they will heap for themselves teachers in accord with their own desires.....turning their hearing away from the truth, yet they will be turned to myths." (II Tim. 4:3,4).

In this era, we walk by faith, not by sight; and we, like Paul, should observe that it is better to be "glorying in infirmities" rather than to glory in miracles, whether such be real or false: or, in supernatural signs like a gift of "tongues". These had their appropriate place at Pentecost and briefly thereafter, until the Word of God for this present era had been completed by Paul (Col. 1:25). Peter was inspired to reveal that such phenomena as occurred at Pentecost will reappear in "the last days" when Joel's prophecy is to be fulfilled; thus, after God restores His covenant blessings to Israel but NOT TODAY. "This is that, Peter said, "which was spoken by the prophet Joel and it shall come to pass in the last days." Quite plainly there, Peter did not say that "the last days" began at Pentecost but such supernatural signs as occurred then were LIKE UNTO some which will yet appear when Joel's prophecy is to be fulfilled in prophetic "last days" after God's favor returns to Israel. To us it should be obvious that Peter would have had no occasion for alluding to Joel's prophecy if such temporary signs as appeared at Pentecost had been divinely appointed to remain and operate from then on throughout the Christian era. In the light of Peter's speech, the signs at Pentecost were only a likeness to such signs as will yet appear at the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy which Peter clearly assigned to "the last days." Neither Joel nor any other Hebrew prophecy can have any fulfilment now until after this present Christian era expires. When Joel's prophecy is to be fulfilled in "the last days," as Peter called them, the signs of that time will be completely new to the generation of Israel then living; even more amazing than were those which appeared to Jewish descendants at Pentecost.

If we now fail to observe a clear distinction between the present era for the calling of those who will constitute the body of Christ (a time therefore when spiritual blessings alone would predominate) in contrast to the future era of Israel's renaissance when earthly as well as spiritual blessings will be normal, one consequence of that is inevitable ...the enemy will NOT fail to observe that vitally important distinction! Foreseeing that true signs and miracles will be in season for the forthcoming era of Israel's renaissance, the enemy seeks now in advance to counterfeit these; to discredit what will be true later by a previous display of that which is false!

There are of course quite different reasons why God may answer the prayer of faith even now by the healing of some physical infirmity, though not for the same reason as in apostolic days when miracles were sometimes performed to serve as "the signs of an apostle" (II Cor. 12:12). Today there are NEITHER apostles nor prophets. Now the prayer of faith will be tendered only in deference to God's will and wisdom, always subject to some purpose of His own which is often unknown to us. Scripture indicates also that each one of us has an appointed time, known to God but not to us, and no wish or petition of ours should presume to improve on God's infinite wisdom. Paul himself prayed thrice for the healing of some unnamed personal infirmity and he yielded in faith-obedience to the only answer he received, "Sufficient for you is My grace, for My power in infirmity is being perfected" (II Cor. 12:8-9).

These are critical times when we should be "reclaiming the era for the days are wicked" (Eph. 5:16) and that may involve the necessary risk of offending even our dearest friends if any such have been enticed by supernatural signs displayed out of season. Even then we are well admonished "not to be fighting, but with meekness training those who are antagonizing, seeing whether God may be giving them repentance to be sobering up out of the trap of the Adversary, having been caught alive by him for that one's will." The vital words there would appear to be "caught alive." Undoubtedly the Adversary is less concerned now with deceiving the world at large than he is in deceiving the chosen. Only they who have passed from death unto life; only they can be "caught alive" (II Tim. 2:26).

Since many deceptions are often promoted in the name of some certain "Jesus," we recall that in Paul's day he warned those at Corinth about someone who had appeared there after his own visit; and that one was heralding what Paul called "another Jesus" unlike the One he himself had proclaimed. He said such were false apostles, deceitful workers, and ministers of Satan who had transformed himself as a messenger of light (II Cor. 11:1-15). We are not to presume that the saints at Corinth were deceived by someone who would plainly admit he was heralding "another Jesus" unlike the One Paul had proclaimed. We are to remember it was PAUL who warned them they were being deceived. The deceiver himself would scarcely divulge that he was heralding ANOTHER Jesus. He would have had little or no success in persuading true believers if his message had been totally false. More conceivably it did contain much truth, though mingled with error, and we are reminded that "A little leaven is leavening the whole kneading" (I Cor. 5:7).

Among the saints at Corinth some were spiritually immature. These were such as Paul said he had nourished with milk, not with solid food (I Cor. 3:2); yet he had betrothed them all as a pure virgin to Christ (II Cor. 11:2,3). It was especially because of those immature ones that he said he feared the "serpent" would deceive them by similar means as when he beguiled Eve with a cunning mixture of truth and falsehood. In that day there was a valid and useful purpose for oral revelations of truths not yet written; also, a temporary use for the gift of tongues. Of those two Paul said the gift of prophecy was greater than the gift of tongues, but both were to be discarded when the written Word of God would be completed. "Tongues," he said, would "cease" (I Cor. 13:8).

Here is where many go astray by assuming there is still some valid need for a gift of tongues for the benefit of many believers who now, as in Paul's day, are yet immature. Though he referred to these in the same context where he said that tongues would cease, we must not infer from this, as some mistakenly may, that "tongues" were to remain throughout the Christian era as a means whereby immature believers were to become mature. Paul said definitely that tongues were to "cease;" then by comparing that earlier revelation in Corinthians with his subsequent revelation in Ephesians, it becomes manifest they had ceased already in Paul's own lifetime; as soon as the present written Word had been completed (Col. 1:25).

That is something which especially every new reader should verify from Scripture by comparing Paul's former revelation in Corinthians with his subsequent revelation in Ephesians, written years later from the Roman prison. In I Cor. 12:28-29 he named all the various gifts which were useful and needful at that earlier time and he also placed these in the order of their importance, beginning with apostles. Second to these, he said, were the prophets of that day and then the teachers. These were followed by other gifts which we shall NOT find any longer in his subsequent revelation. At that earlier time when Paul wrote Corinthians the gifts did include oral prophecy and, last of all, the gift of "tongues."

Then as we turn to Paul's subsequent revelation in Ephesians 4:11-13, written years later in the Roman prison, where he mentioned the gifts which remained at that later day, we find there were five of these, including only the first three which had been named in Corinthians and two not mentioned before at all.

There in Ephesians we see first the apostles and prophets, then evangelists, pastors and teachers; but otherwise none of the gifts remained which appear in Paul's earlier revelation of Corinthians, neither oral prophecies nor the gift of tongues nor any others. Seeing also that Scripture recognizes no successors either to apostles or prophets, this ultimately left no remaining gifts other than evangelists, pastors and teachers; and none of those were commissioned to receive or proclaim any other revelations than the written Word of God itself contains; no assumed private revelations; rather, as Paul instructed Timothy: "Do the work of an evangelist" and "Herald the Word."

In the same passage of Ephesians where Paul confirms the gifts which now remain, he shows also that these and these alone are by themselves entirely sufficient for the spiritual development of all believers in this present era. These gifts alone are declared "for the upbuilding of the body of Christ, unto the end that we should ALL attain to the unity of the faith...to a mature man, the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ, and that we by no means still be minors, surging hither and thither and being carried about in every wind of teaching" (Eph. 4:12-14 CLNT).

This, of course, is not new to many of our present readers but hopefully it is they who will join with us in reminding others that the gift of tongues was caused to "cease" as long ago as in Paul's day, so now there is no longer any valid use for the revival of supernatural powers during the remainder of this present era while we are to walk by faith and not by sight. Unlike the Lord's supper, Paul said the gift of tongues would cease and it did cease. The Lord's supper, he said, would continue "until He should be coming" (I Cor. 11:26) and so it will. Comparing either of those with the other, there is no equivocation as to that which would cease and that which would remain. If oral prophecies or "tongues" had been permitted to remain as valid gifts, equal to the authority of Scripture, it is obvious by now that ingenious imitations could be imposed on us and we would be vulnerable to many deceptions.

Our first concern now is an urgent appeal to all who have not yet sought or accepted any present allurements by which some have been persuaded to seek a gift of tongues or some other supernatural power. To them we would earnestly entreat, that they may consider this well: Ever since the apostles fell asleep, the saints of many centuries—reformers and martyrs included—have lived and died in the faith of Christ, never seeking or desiring any further revelation apart from the sacred Word itself. Thus, we would plead with such of you—be content with that alone and, as Paul said, "Study to be quiet" (I Thess. 4:11).

Our further concern is for certain others; some who already have resorted to a quest for strange and untimely revelations, even teachers who long may have loved the Lord as they still may well intend to do. To all such we sincerely appeal: May you pause to reflect and reconsider if you are not seeking to appropriate what belongs to Israel in a future era but is not for present-day saints; thus, building with materials that will have to be burned; wood, hay and straw rather than gold, silver and precious stones (I Cor. 3:12,13). Paul reminds us that we should "look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen;" not at temporary things but those which endure for the eons and beyond. Any present pursuit of "things which are seen" is not in accord with Scripture rightly divided.

**THERE IS NO PRESENT VALID REVELATION
APART FROM THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD**

Melvin E. Johnson (Treasures of Truth, Instalment Five, June 1972)