ST. PETER

Servant and Apostle of Jesus Christ

Lessons and Devotions from the Life of The Apostle Peter



Lord, You know all things. You know that I love you.
Jesus said to him, *Feed My sheep.*

John 21:17

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Other books in this series:

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May these writings serve as a source of personal reflection and devotion, as a reminder, an encouragement and an inspiration to the reader. While the words were written over a century ago, they still hold true today more than ever as the establishment of Christ's Kingdom approaches very near.

St. Peter

St. Peter has proven to be one of the most helpful of Christ's twelve Apostles, and the secret of his assistance lies in the Scriptural revelation of his human nature, its strength and its weaknesses. He was the first of the twelve Apostles to acknowledge the Master as the Messiah, the Sent of God; he was the first of the twelve to deny him. He was the only one of the twelve who drew his sword in the Master's defense and the only one who, later, swore that he never knew him. By Divine arrangement, to him were given the keys with which to open the door to the High Calling—to the Kingdom. At Pentecost he used one of the keys of power and boldly proclaimed to the Jews the opening of the way to glory, honor and immortality. A little later, at the appointed time, he opened the door to the same High Calling for the Gentiles when, by his preaching, Cornelius, the first Gentile acceptable to God, was received and begotten of the holy Spirit, this fact giving evidence that the middle-wall of partition, previously separating Jew and Gentile, had been broken down. Yet, after all this knowledge and special opportunity, this great man subsequently dissembled to the extent of ignoring God's grace to the Gentiles as being sufficient, discriminating between Jews and Gentiles and their equality before the Lord.

But in all these experiences St. Peter displayed the fact that his heart, at its core, was loyal to God, to truth, to righteousness, and that the weaknesses, the faults, the blemishes of his character were of his flesh and not of his real heart intention. For his denial of the Master he wept bitterly. And for his failure to recognize the Gentiles he made full reparation most humbly. The same exhibition of human nature which makes St. Peter attractive is that which made David, the Prophet and king of Israel, attractive. He was not so saintly that he could not make a mistake. He was not so far above the remainder of humanity that they could not realize in him a fellow-creature. Yet withal he was not so debased as to make him abhorrent. His weaknesses were fully offset by the abundant evidence of his heart-loyalty to God and to righteousness. His very experiences in stumbling and recovery have so saturated his Psalms that they touch a responsive chord in nearly every heart which is loyal to God and which has had any degree of experience with sin and weakness—its own and those of others.

Peter remains even today the most fascinating of that band of men who surrounded our Lord in the days of his earthly pilgrimage. G. C. Morgan said of Peter: "Now I am convinced that in Peter we have the greatest human revealed in the New Testament. I do not say the greatest man in his achievement or in one particular capacity of his being, but the most wonderful revelation of human nature. This man of intelligence was perpetually making blunders. This man of emotions was guilty of such impulse that he worked harm in the very cause he desired to help."

Of St. Peter Southouse says: "Peter was an average man, and for this reason he comes nearer to us than some of his colleagues do. But average men have their

splendid moments, such as when St. Peter tried to walk on the water, in this action he tried to do a thing for which he seemed to have no abilities. He set out to do some thing of which he had no experience. A swift glance amongst the men and women whom we know will be enough to prove that it is never safe to prophesy the achievements of which they are capable, for extraordinary things have been done by the last man in the world."

Dr. Davis said about St. Peter: "Peter was intellectual. He asked Jesus more questions than any other of the Apostles. The capacity for asking questions is a revelation of the intellectual. It may also be a revelation of ignorance; but the man for who never asks a question is certainly deficient in his intellectuality. . . . Peter was a man of heart, sobbing and impetuous. His virtues and his faults had their common root in his enthusiastic disposition. It is to his praise that, along with the weed of rash haste, there grew more strongly into his life the fair plant of burning love and ready reception of Truth."

One of the great lessons which the Master taught his followers, and which all in the School of Christ must learn, is that, with burning love and zeal for God and for righteousness, we should also have moderation—exercising the spirit of a sound mind. Christ's followers are exhorted to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Their wisdom is not to be merely the selfish kind, which would look out for its own interests, but of the generous kind which looks out for the interests of all, and particularly for the interests of the Lord's cause and for any share therein which he may entrust to us.

In the course of his instructions, Jesus had said to his disciples, in advance of the trying hour of his betrayal— "All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written (in the Prophets), I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee." —Matt. 26:31,32.

Then spoke the impulsive Peter, "Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." (v. 33) Alas! how little did this courageous man understand the nature of the trials and difficulties immediately before him, or realize the weak points of his own impulsive nature. Yet if we are grieved with his denial of the Master, we must rejoice to note his faith and love and zeal, as manifested in his acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah and his later declaration that nothing should ever shake his loyalty.

However, it is the specially loyal and ardent that the Adversary seeks most persistently to entrap. Thus Jesus, on this very occasion, explained to St. Peter, "Satan hath desired to have thee that he might sift thee" (Luke 22:31); that he might separate you from your loyalty to Christ and discourage you from discipleship, overwhelming you with fear and with your own weaknesses. The Master added, "But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." We may well understand that the same loving Master still assists all of his true, warmhearted followers, whatever their weaknesses of heredity. We may well understand, too, that he is able to develop all such into strong characters, if they abide in his love, continuing in their zeal. He is able to make all things work together for their good—even the weaknesses of heredity may work out for the faithful that

"far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" which the Lord has promised. [After telling Peter that upon his confession that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, the Sent of God, he would build His church, Jesus told him]:

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.
Matthew 16:19

How successfully he used this key or authority to throw open the privileges of the Kingdom is clearly stated in the account of the preaching done immediately after the holy Spirit was poured out. The other apostles, of course, were associated in the work and assisted, but Peter was the leader and chief spokesman in that opening work of the Gospel dispensation, in the invitation then extended to all the Jews to purge themselves from their sins through faith in the Redeemer and to accept the conditions of the Kingdom, as we read—– "Peter, standing up with the eleven lifted up his voice and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you and hearken to my words. . . This is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel. . . Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the holy Spirit," etc. [Acts 2:14, 16, 38]

So powerfully was the key of the Kingdom used by the Lord in the hands of St. Peter that 3,000 believers were found and brought in through the door thus opened—–six times as many as had accepted our Lord during the three and one-half years of his ministry. It was not that Peter was thus powerful and a more eloquent preacher than he had ever been before, it was not that he was superior to his Master, but that the time had come for the throwing open of the door to the Israelites indeed in whom there was no guile, and the Lord's providence and holy Spirit directed and overruled so that this great work was accomplished—–so that those previously the Lord's he granted to see their privilege of entering into the Kingdom class.

For three and one-half years after Pentecost the blessing of the Lord was upon the Jews according to his promise, up to the end of their symbolic week of favor. That week of years, seven years, began with Jesus' baptism, and in the midst of it, as the prophet had foretold, Messiah was cut off, not for himself but for the sins of the people. The remaining half of the week, three and one-half years, marked special, continued favor upon natural Israel for the gathering out of them of all the Israelites indeed in whom there was no guile. During this time, God's favor being still confined to Israel, the Gentiles had neither part nor lot in the matter. But at the end of that seventieth week, namely, three and a half years after Pentecost, God's favor was due to extend beyond Israel to all Gentiles who were in a proper condition of heart. There, as the Apostle Paul explains, the middle wall of partition was broken down, and the Gentiles obtained opportunity to share in all the blessings of the Kingdom as fully and thoroughly as the Jews.
R. 4712 and NS186

St. Mark

Tradition has it that the Garden of Gethsemane belonged to the family of which the Apostles John and James were members, and that for this reason the Lord and his disciples were privileged to feel themselves at home there. St. Mark, the writer of one of the Gospels, but not one of the Apostles, is credited with having been a member of the same family. One of the accounts of the arrest of the Master tells that amongst those who followed after him was a young man wrapped with a sheet, and who fled naked when some members of the band attempted to lay hold of him. That young man, tradition says, years afterwards was known as St. Mark. R. 4707

Mark's Gospel record is supposed to have been indited by Peter himself, Mark being in a large measure Peter's amanuensis. (R. 2469) *The Holman Bible Dictionary* tells us that according to early church tradition, Mark recorded and arranged the "memories" of Peter, thereby producing a Gospel based on apostolic witness. He wrote his Gospel for Gentile Christians. He explains Jewish customs in detail for the benefit of readers unfamiliar with Judaism (7:3-4; 12:18) Mark's Gentile audience may explain his omission of the genealogy of Jesus. Early Christian tradition placed Mark in Rome preserving the words of Peter for Roman Christians shortly before the apostle's death (see 1 Pet. 5:13) According to tradition, Peter was martyred in Rome during the Neroinian persecution, which would place the date of Mark's Gospel about A.D. 64 to 68.

Good storytellers captivate audiences by using everyday language which provokes strong imagery. Mark's language is simple, direct, and common. His sometimes rough and unrefined Greek grammar facilitates his ability to communicate the gospel message by using familiar patterns of speech. When Mark told a story, he possessed a flair for the dramatic and an eye for detail. His description of events was replete with vivid images which evoke a variety of emotions in just one story (see 5:1-20; compare Matt. 8:28-34).

Jesus's favorite self-designation, especially in Mark, was "Son of Man." In Mark's Gospel, Jesus is identified with humanity in title and in kind. Mark portrayed Jesus as a Man possessing every human emotion. Moved by compassion, anger, frustration, mercy, and sorrow (1:41; 3:5; 8:17; 14:6,33), Jesus ministered among His own kind. Mark offered the full humanity of Jesus without reservation (see 3:21; 4:38; 6:3-6; 13:32); from the beginning of His earthly ministry (2:20), Jesus lived in the ominous shadow of the cross until the agony of Gethsemane almost overwhelmed Him (14:34).

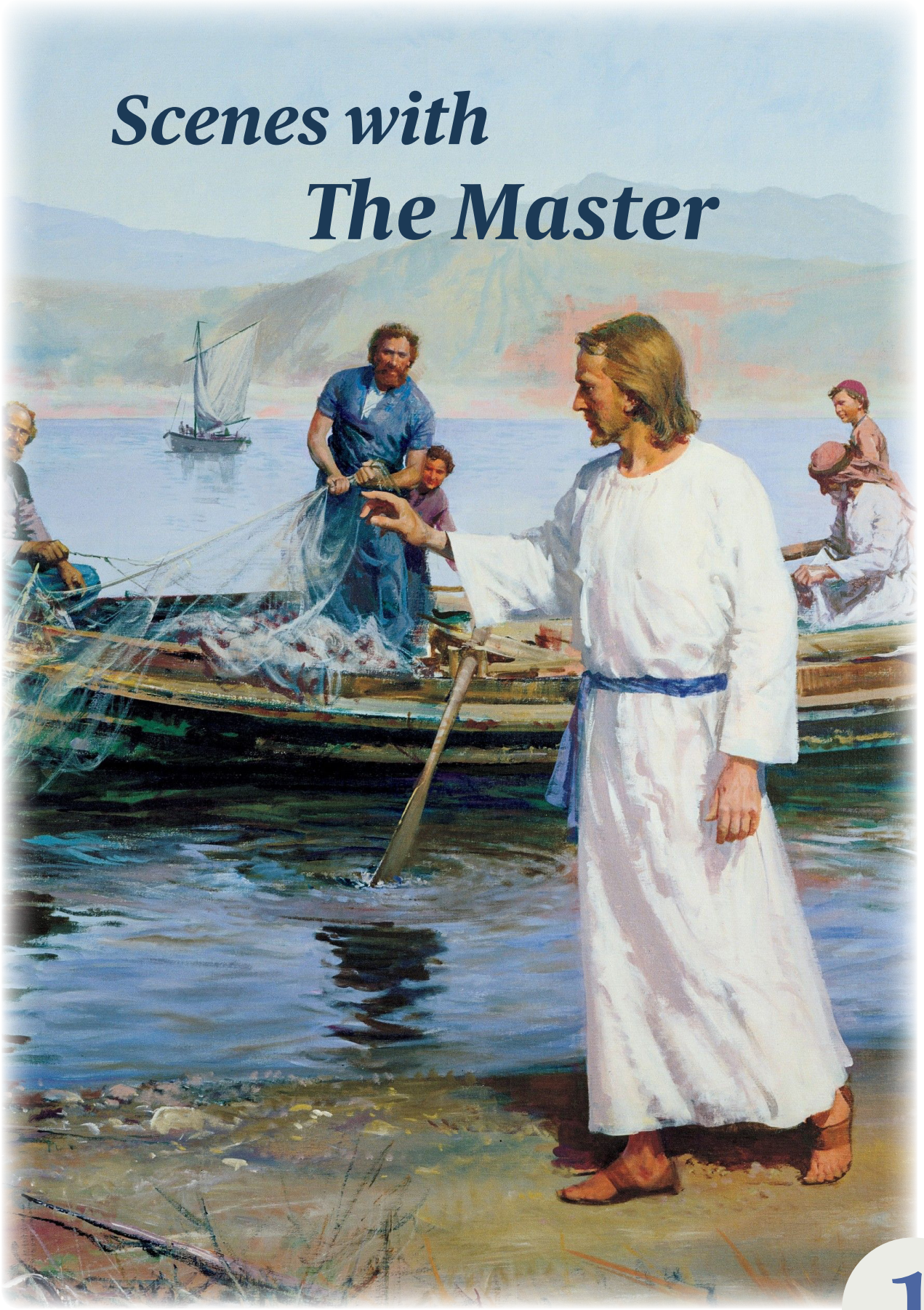
The literary form of Mark's Gospel is no accident. The arrangement of the gospel material gives every indication that a skilled literary craftsman has been at work. For example, Mark found irony in pairing the story of the disciples

questioning the identity of Jesus after the stilling of the storm, "What manner of man is this?" (4:41) with the account of the demons who are quick to shout, "Jesus, thou son of the most high God" (5:7). When the disciples finally offered their superlative confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi (8:27-30), they failed to understand the full implications of Jesus' messiahship (8:31-38). Mark depicted their partial spiritual vision by recording the unique miracle of Jesus healing the blind man in two stages (8:22-25). Although the disciples saw the messianic secret, their vision would not be focused until the resurrection. Beyond doubt, Mark's portrait of Jesus is a "painting" which can be appreciated both up close (style) and from a distance (form). [1]

John Mark, the writer of the Gospel by Mark, cousin of Barnabas, and son of one of the Marys at Jerusalem (Acts 12:12,25), is noted as being their minister, attendant servant, and this, together with the fact that he was not sent out by the Church as a missionary with the others, shows us clearly that while all brethren are to be very highly esteemed as brethren this does not signify that they have all one office or one work. It is the same lesson which the apostle inculcates in 1 Cor. 12, saying, "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." R. 3006

1 "Mark, The Gospel of," *Holman Bible Dictionary,* edited by Trent C. Butler, Holman Bible Publishers, 1991, pp. 920-922.

Scenes with The Master



Calling of The Fishermen (Christ Calling Peter and Andrew) by Harry Anderson

1

We Have Found The Messiah! John 1:35-42

Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said,
"Behold the Lamb of God!"

The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them,
"What do you seek?"

They said to Him,
"Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?"

He said to them, "Come and see."

They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour). One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him,
"We have found the Messiah!" (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.

Now when Jesus looked at him, He said,
"You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).

> Notice the quiet, unostentatious, meek manner in which our Redeemer began the announcement of his mission. Quietly he presented himself to John for baptism, and after receiving there the anointing of the holy Spirit he went into absolute seclusion in the wilderness for more than a month, for forty days studying what the divine plan had arranged to be his course. He triumphed over all the Adversary's allurements and blandishments—determined not to do Satan's will, nor even follow his own judgment, but strictly and implicitly follow and obey the outlined program which the Father had laid down in the Word. He returned to John, seeking companionship with those who were nearest to the Lord and waiting for divine providence to guide in his affairs.
>
> It was the very next day after this testimony to the priests and Levites that John, in the presence of two of his disciples, looking intently upon Jesus as he passed near (no doubt wondering how our Lord's Messiahship would be made known), exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God!" This was the same testimony (only abbreviated) that he had given to the priests and Levites, and which had evidently fallen, in their case,

upon dull ears. But note the difference in the case of those who were "Israelites indeed:" the two disciples immediately followed Jesus. John's testimony became to them the **drawing power of God,** because they were in a condition of heart to be susceptible to that influence. Thus we see clearly illustrated how some are drawn and others are not drawn by the same message, and we see also that the divine drawing does not operate arbitrarily, but in accordance with certain fixed principles pertinent to the divine plan. It was not sufficient that a testimony should be given, it was not sufficient that a curiosity should be aroused; it was necessary additionally that the interest awakened should be so powerful as to lead to action on the part of those who were drawn.

The Lord is seeking not merely the curious, but the truth-hungry, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and for fellowship with himself, and here, as in every instance, he that seeketh, in this proper attitude of heart, findeth. The two disciples had not followed the Lord far until their faith and zeal began to be rewarded: the Lord turned to them and was the first to speak, and thus he illustrated his own words respecting those drawn of the Father to him, "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Had our Lord not thus condescended it would have been a difficult matter for these humble fishermen to have approached one so far above them in dignity and in appearance—one whom they had just learned was the great Messiah, long promised of God to be the Prince of the kings of the earth.

Our Lord's salutation, "What seek ye?" not only overcame the diffidence of those who sought him, but the more they would consider his words subsequently, the more meaningful they would find them, as we do today. And this seems to be the question which the Lord puts to all those who approach him, and essay to become his followers,

What seek, ye?

Are you seeking loaves and fishes of earthly advantage? Are you seeking earthly honor and social and political influence and preferment? The answer soon or later will be manifested by the conduct of the seekers, though evidently all do not realize, at the time, what are their real motives in seeking the Lord.

The would-be disciples of Jesus heard the question without discerning, of course, its depth; nevertheless, being in the right condition of heart their answer was along proper lines—Rabbi (master), where are you stopping? They seem to have understood that like themselves he was a Galilean, and that like themselves and others he was merely visiting in that vicinity on account of John's mission work, which drew great multitudes. Their question implied in a pleasant way a desire to become more intimately acquainted with Jesus. And he accepted it in this manner, and invited them to his stopping place; as it was about four o'clock in the afternoon they remained with him the remainder of the day, and we may well imagine what the Evangelist has not recorded respecting the pleasure and profit which came to them during these hours. The two spent the remainder of the day with the Lord, and doubtless "learned of him," much to their comfort and joy and the establishment of their faith. The record is "They abode with him." This may refer to the temporary

stay of one day, but it may with equal propriety be understood to mean that they remained with the Lord as his disciples thereafter—to the very end of life.

> **It is appropriate that we should give heed to the Master's words as though they were addressed to each of us individually, What are *you* seeking? Let us answer our Master in our own hearts and in prayer; and before we make answer, let us consider well that it may be a truthful one, for we might indeed deceive ourselves, but could not deceive him with whom we have to do. R. 4116**

One of the two who heard John and followed Jesus was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter— "He findeth first his own brother Simon." The revised version may be understood to imply that both disciples sought their brothers, but that Andrew found his brother first. If, as is supposed, John was the other disciple, we know that he had a brother, James, and that the latter also was brought to the Lord. The particular thought we wish to emphasize here as worthy of special commendation, embodying a proper lesson for us, is the fact that these disciples in beginning the service of the Truth went first to their own brethren. This implies that they had brotherly love in their hearts, as we should properly expect all would have who would be found worthy to be disciples of Jesus. It implies that they had influence with their brethren along religious lines, which probably would not have been true if they had not been recognized by their relatives as men of character and principle.

When Peter was brought to the Lord, "Jesus looked upon him," or as we might express it, "read him through and through," and then said, Your present name is Simon, and you are the son of John, but you shall be called Cephas, —Hebrew for Peter (Greek, petros, a stone). This may be understood as a kind of prophecy on our Lord's part respecting a great change in Peter's character. Peter was naturally very impulsive—not sufficiently solid, too easily carried about; and yet our Lord evidently saw in him sterling qualities of heart, honesty, sincerity of purpose: and knowing the influence which his teachings and the holy spirit would exercise upon such a character, he foretold a change which would make of Peter one of the staunchest and most substantial of his corps of disciples. This prophecy of change was implied in the new name given him, signifying solidity—a stone—whereas his previous name, Simon, signified a listener.

Although Peter was the only one of the twelve whose name was thus changed we may readily suppose that the characters of all were considerably changed, under the influence of the great Teacher and of the holy spirit, which came upon them at Pentecost. And so it is with all who become the Lord's disciples: to enter the school of Christ and to remain there means, as the Apostle expresses it, that we will be "transformed by the renewing of our minds." And the Lord promises all such that they shall have "a new name," expressive of the new character, but which no man can appreciate except those who receive it—the name of Christ. —Rev. 2:17.
R. 3482, R. 2570, R. 4116



This same lesson is pointedly illustrated by an anecdote told by Pastor Spurgeon, deceased, of a man who was invited into an orchard to eat some of the fruit; he refused, for he said that he had picked up some of the apples by the roadside that fell from the trees, and they were poor and bitter. The owner replied those trees were placed there on purpose, so that bad boys would not be attracted into the orchard to steal. "But" said he, "come inside, and there the apples are delicious." Thus it is with those who see Christianity only from the exterior. They see many misrepresentations of true religion and true faith in prominent places, and even if they be able to distinguish as between the true Christianity and its misrepresentation in churchianity, they are apt to see only the self-denials, the crosses, the persecution for righteousness' sake, etc., and know nothing comparatively of the heavenly peace and blessing enjoyed by those who have entered into newness of life with Christ, who are supported well by the gracious promises of the divine Word and by the fellowship of spirit granted to them, which permits them to rejoice even in tribulation and count their disadvantages as but light afflictions enduring but for a moment, when compared with their higher joys, and their hopes that these shall be eternal.

Let us leave this lesson with two thoughts specially clear before our minds:

1 The importance of finding the Lord, and not merely of gaining information about him.

2 The propriety and importance of seeking out the "brethren," and of bringing them not merely to a knowledge of abstract truth, but especially to the Lord, and to intimate communion and fellowship with him. R. 2572

A Great Catch

Luke 5:3-8

Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon,
"Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

But Simon answered and said to Him,
"Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing. Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."

And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying,
"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

A period of about a year elapsed between the temptation in the wilderness and the scene of this lesson on the Lake of Galilee. In the meantime some of John's disciples and others had accepted Jesus as their teacher in heavenly things and were more or less in his company. Peter, Andrew, James and John being amongst these. It was about this time that John was imprisoned, and Jesus' ministry seems to have become more vigorous thereafter.

It was probably at an earlier interview that our Lord gave Simon his surname of Peter, as it occurs in this lesson. These fishermen had probably met with Jesus and heard his preaching on other occasions, and were his disciples in a general sense of the word—that is, followers of him, believers on him, advocates of his teachings. Now, however, the time had come for our Lord's selection of the twelve apostles who should be with him continually and see his miracles and hear his teachings and be witnesses of all things said and done: and they in turn might in due time serve as his special representatives and be able to give to us, and to all of his subsequent followers accurate and truthful records of the principal events of his ministry.

As the narrative shows, Jesus was on the shore of the Lake of Galilee, and the public attracted to him—hungry for the word of life—pressed so closely as to inconvenience him, and he stepped into one of the fishing boats moored to the shore. It was Peter's boat, and our Lord requested him to push the boat a little from the shore, from which position he could the more easily address the large crowds

on the shelving beach. Peter and his brother Andrew were managing one of the boats, and James and his brother John another of the same partnership, while hired helpers were also assisting (Mark 1:20.) They were cleaning and mending their nets, for they had been out all night; they were preparing for the next night's fishing, for at that time it appears that most of the net fishing is done. These fishermen and perhaps others in the same vicinity proceeded with their work while the Lord was preaching, no doubt giving earnest attention to his words at the same time.

When our Lord had finished his discourse he suggested to Peter that he take the boat to deep water and let down his nets for a catch of fish. The response was that no fish were to be expected—that they had toiled all night without results; but through respect to the Master, if he desired it they would let down their nets again, without having any expectations as fishermen that they would meet with any success.

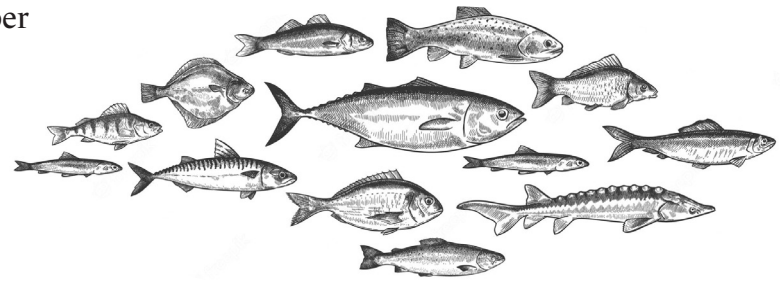


The Miraculous Catch

The result was a net full of fish, the weight of which began to break the meshes of the net. Their partners were signalled to come to assist, with the final result that both boats were heavily laden with fish, so as almost to endanger their safety. When Peter noted the miracle performed he fell at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He realized that he was in the presence of one possessed of more than human wisdom and power, and correspondingly he felt afraid. Although he and his partners had known Jesus for now over a year, he had never before so thoroughly realized the wonderful power hidden in Christ.

A miracle was performed, however we may view it: we might suppose the creation of the fish on the spot, or the power of the Lord to at will bring a great school of fish to that vicinity, or the knowledge of the Lord that such a school of fish was in the vicinity. No matter which view we take, it would still leave the miracle intact;

nor should we wish it otherwise, realizing that it is on a parity with others of Jesus' mighty works. Respecting the fishes of that lake we quote from a prominent writer as follows:



"The Sea of Galilee was always famed for the number and variety of its fish. There are more than fifty kinds. The thickness of the shoals of fish in the Lake of Gennesaret is almost incredible to any one who has not witnessed them. They often cover an area of more than an acre; and when the fish move slowly forward in a mass, and are rising out of the water, they are packed so close together that it appears as though a heavy rain were beating down upon the surface of the water."

It is evident that this miracle was performed for the purpose of fully and finally convincing Peter, Andrew, James and John respecting the Lord's relationship to the Father, and his power of control in respect to things temporal as well as things spiritual. The lesson evidently had its designed effect, and our Lord clinched the matter by then and there inviting the four to become his permanent disciples —to become fishers of men. This was the opposite course from what Peter had suggested—that the Lord depart from them because he was perfect and holy and had direct intercourse evidently with the heavenly powers, while they were poor and weak and sinful, imperfect through the fall. Separation did indeed take place, but it was between the disciples and their earthly business, not between them and the Lord. "They forsook all and followed him." Similarly tests have come to all whom the Lord has called throughout this age. R. 3720 and R. 3307

Peter's words to the Lord, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man," represented his acknowledgment of the great difference between himself and the Master. He caught the true situation, that he was a sinful, imperfect man, while the one before him, the Master, was perfect and in full accord with the Father, and therefore permitted to be the dispenser of the Father's mercies. Peter's real sentiment was probably the reverse of his expression. He meant, "O Lord, although I am a sinful man, permit me to be near thee, that I may be blessed by contact with thee." This was the proper attitude of heart and the real prayer, which Jesus answered in making him one of his chosen twelve. R. 3308

Follow Me

Mark 1:16-20

And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." They immediately left their nets and followed Him. When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

There was a great multitude on the shore who heard the Lord's teachings, but not to all of them did his message come with the same force and to the same end. Only a few were specially chosen and called. Doubtless there were elementary conditions in the hearts of these four that constituted them the ones ready and worthy to receive the special message. There may have been Israelites indeed in the multitude on the shore who were not yet ripe for the special invitation of discipleship, just as these same four who now forsook all to follow the Lord had been with him more or less for about a year, yet had not until now reached the place where they were ready to forsake all.

The narrative would seem to imply that these four disciples had acted in a very irrational manner, leaving their boats and nets instantly without disposing of them or making provision for their care; but Mark's account informs us that the boats were left in the care of Zebedee, the father of James and John, with hired helpers. Nor need we suppose that the Lord and these four who became so prominent as his apostles started away from that vicinity that same hour or even that same day. It may have required time to make proper arrangements for the fish, for the business interests of the partnership, etc. The same is true of us: we have duties in life which it would be wrong to abruptly cast aside and ignore, responsibilities to others and a stewardship. The "spirit of a sound mind" is to govern the Lord's people in all of their affairs, both temporal and spiritual.

The important thing decided at the moment and decided positively and permanently was that they accepted the Lord's invitation to enter the Father's service with him —fishing on a higher and grander scale, for men—gathering them into the Gospel net, with a view to their ultimate glorification as New Creatures in Christ and participants with him in the glory, honor, and immortality of his Kingdom soon to be established. Let us each remember the importance of a positive decision respecting our consecration to the Lord, our acceptance of service under him as our Master and Captain. Let us then as wisely as possible arrange life's affairs so as to be without carefulness respecting earthly things that we may the more readily and more completely give all of our time and energy to the most important of all works, the service of God, tidings of great joy for all people.

He has called us also to be fishers of men, and we have responded to his call and left all to follow him, to be his disciples, to share his experiences and whatever ignominy

may come as the result of faithfulness to him and the truths which he proclaimed. To us also he has displayed his powers, permitting us to see and know things which are kept secret from those without. To us he has given the good tidings of the Kingdom to encourage us, to inspire our hearts with love and loyalty. Blessed were those disciples of old, and blessed are the disciples of today! The blessing then was largely dependent upon the nearness of the disciples to the Lord, and the nearness was marked largely by the degree of zeal and devotion; and thus we must expect it to be today. It was Peter, James and John, who were the most zealous of the apostles, that had the special favors when such were to be given. And so it is today; those who most cheerfully, most zealously forget self and earthly ambitions, aims and projects, and who most fully give themselves to the Lord and to his service, these may walk nearest to the Lord at all times; these may go with him to the Mount; these may be special witnesses of his powers, and these in special times may be close to the Lord.

However much we have heard of Jesus, however much we have rejoiced in the salvation which he died to secure for us, however much we have trusted in the merit of his sacrifice, we did not become his disciples until we had formally reached the point of giving our hearts, our lives, our wills to him---responding to his invitation, becoming followers of God as dear children under the guidance and instruction of our elder brother, Jesus. The opportunity does not come to all of us in just the same form that it presented itself to the four fishermen of our lesson, and yet there is a similarity. With many of us, as the Apostle explains, it is the Lord's will that we should abide in the vocation in which we were when the message of grace first reached us. (1 Cor. 7:20-22.) Not all are called to an open, public ministry, devoting all of time, talent, effort and interest to the Gospel message. The majority of the called the Lord evidently intends to instruct as his disciples while they are about their ordinary business, the duties and responsibilities of life.

With these, however, it is necessary that there be a forsaking of boats and fishing tackle, etc., in the heart from the moment that a full consecration is made to the Lord. We cannot serve God and Mammon. We cannot have two objects in life, both equally prominent to our attention. The Lord will not have it so with those who are to be his joint-heirs in the Kingdom. This class must appreciate the privilege of fellowship in his labor, sufferings and hopes of glory to such an extent that their hearts will no longer be in the ordinary affairs of life, their ambitions will no longer be for wealth or name or fame from the world's standpoint. All such ambitions and hopes we must "forsake" if we would be his disciples. He must be first. R. 3721 and R. 3334

Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. Matthew 4:19

The expression, "fishers of men," suggests many good features illustrative of the work of the Gospel Age. In fishing for fish there is a carefulness exercised that is very necessary to success. The skillful fisherman studies what kind of fish-hook to use and what kind of bait to put on the hook. Then he catches the fish individually. Likewise very much of the work of this Age has been an individual work, accomplished by talking to people; those engaged in it should seek wisdom from on High to put the Message into such form as would be most helpful to people---that they may be caught by the Gospel. R. 5555

They Were Astonished

Mark 1:21-32

Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying,
"Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are---the Holy One of God!"

But Jesus rebuked him, saying,
"Be quiet, and come out of him!"

And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.

Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.

At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed.

Although Simon Peter and Andrew were natives of Bethsaida, a few miles north of Capernaum (John 1:44), they had evidently settled down in the latter city, perhaps because larger and more favorable to their business. When Peter, Andrew, James and John accepted the Lord's invitation to become fishers of men they did not immediately depart from home. Some hours if not some days elapsed between the fishing experience and the narrative of this lesson. The Sabbath was come, and Jesus with the four disciples went into the synagogue where he was recognized and given an opportunity for teaching. In the synagogues of olden times there was great liberty to anyone who had the necessary education and faith in the holy Scriptures, to discuss their messages.

Our Lord's teaching impressed his hearers as being reasonable and positive; and this is one of the characteristics of the Truth today. The Lord's message is so clear

and so forceful that it cannot be gainsaid. It appeals to the minds as well as to the hearts of reasonable people now as it did then.

More than a year had elapsed since Jesus began his ministry, although the miracle of Cana of Galilee was in the past, and although he had taught to a considerable extent in that region, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand," yet this seems to have been the first illustration of our Lord's miraculous power over disease and evil spirits. Otherwise the people of that city who had heard Jesus' teaching would not have been so astonished. We may be sure that the four fishermen who had left all to be his disciples were less surprised than the others, because of their knowledge of the increase of the wine at Cana, and their knowledge also of the miraculous draught of fishes a few days previous to this casting out of the demon.

Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!" But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him.
Luke 4:33-35

The demon came out of the man, tearing him—-that is to say, causing a convulsion, a fit. Luke, describing the event, says that he threw the man in the midst—-that is, he fell on the floor of the synagogue in the midst of the people in a fit, but was otherwise unhurt, the demon not having power to do him injury, under the Lord's command. The assembled company was astonished, and inquired, What new teaching is this which has authority to cast out the evil demons? Our Lord's enemies, it will be remembered, subsequently charged him with casting out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, Satan; hence we see the wisdom of his having refused to receive testimony from this demon. To have received their testimony would have been more or less acknowledging them and giving them credit for truthfulness; whereas the Scriptures everywhere represent Satan and his fallen spirits as lying spirits, deceiving the people.

After the synagogue incident our Lord went to the home of Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John accompanying him. Peter's mother-in-law lay sick of a fever, and one of the evangelists intimates that it was a violent form of fever. For the first time it seems to have occurred to the disciples that the Lord's power, which they had seen manifested on various occasions, might be exercised on behalf of this sick woman. Now, their faith grown stronger, they mentioned her case to Jesus and he took her by the hand and lifted her up. Immediately the fever left her.

Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them.
Matthew 8:14-15

Not only so, but instead of being weak and enervated, as is usually the case after a severe fever, she was strong and vigorous and able to serve the family, probably in the setting forth of refreshments and other household matters. This demonstrates that her cure could have been nothing short of miraculous. The operation of the mind, even if it could in any measure have destroyed the fever condition, could not have made good the waste of strength in the system accomplished by the fever.

The fame of Jesus spread rapidly, and at sundown, in the cool of the day, many sick were brought to him to be healed, and many possessed of devils, to have the evil spirits cast out. The concourse was a great one, from all parts of the city, and again our Lord manifested his mercy in healing ailments, and casting out demons; again, however, refusing to converse with the demons and even refusing and forbidding their giving testimony respecting him. Praise and commendation from an evil source are never to be desired.

The miracles which our Lord performed in the little country of Palestine, by which a small proportion of their sick were relieved temporarily, was merely a prophecy of the great healing blessing, freeing from the power of Satan and sin, which he preached, and which is to be fulfilled in due time—during his Millennial Kingdom.

His object in performing these miracles was not, however, merely to thus prophesy the future and greater universal blessings of his reign, but more particularly as signs, as evidences, as witnesses respecting his teachings. It was his doctrines or teachings that were to move men; so that as the power of God these might draw to him that certain class which the Father has given him during this age. If he would utter things respecting a heavenly condition, a birth of the spirit to a spirit nature, a spirit kingdom, etc., it would be eminently proper for any hearer to enquire respecting his authority for making such statements and promises, unknown to others and unproven from any earthly standpoint. It was therefore proper that our Lord should anticipate such enquiries respecting his authority for his teachings by giving miraculous demonstrations of his superhuman power, which he explained to be of the Father and witnessing to his integrity. R. 3309, R. 3727, R. 3310, R. 2582

Had our Lord Jesus performed none of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures how could we today feel the confidence, the assurance, that we do feel respecting him? Had he gone about as a preacher of righteousness and expounder of the divine Word merely, and had he then died just as he did die, would the proof have been as sufficient as it now is that he was indeed the Son of God and that his death was indeed the sacrifice of a perfect one for the imperfect one and his progeny? Would our Lord in preaching to the Jews have accomplished any work without the use of miracles? Were they not necessary to him as a demonstration of his right to take the place of Moses as the antitypical leader of the Israelites indeed? Assuredly this is true. But we have no necessity for such manifestations of miraculous power today. On the contrary, we behold Christianity already too popular with the world. As it is, too many tares are pretending to be wheat. The conditions, therefore, seem to be the very reverse of those which at the first advent demanded miracles for the establishing of the Church on a proper faith basis. R. 3310

One of Twelve

Luke 6:12-16

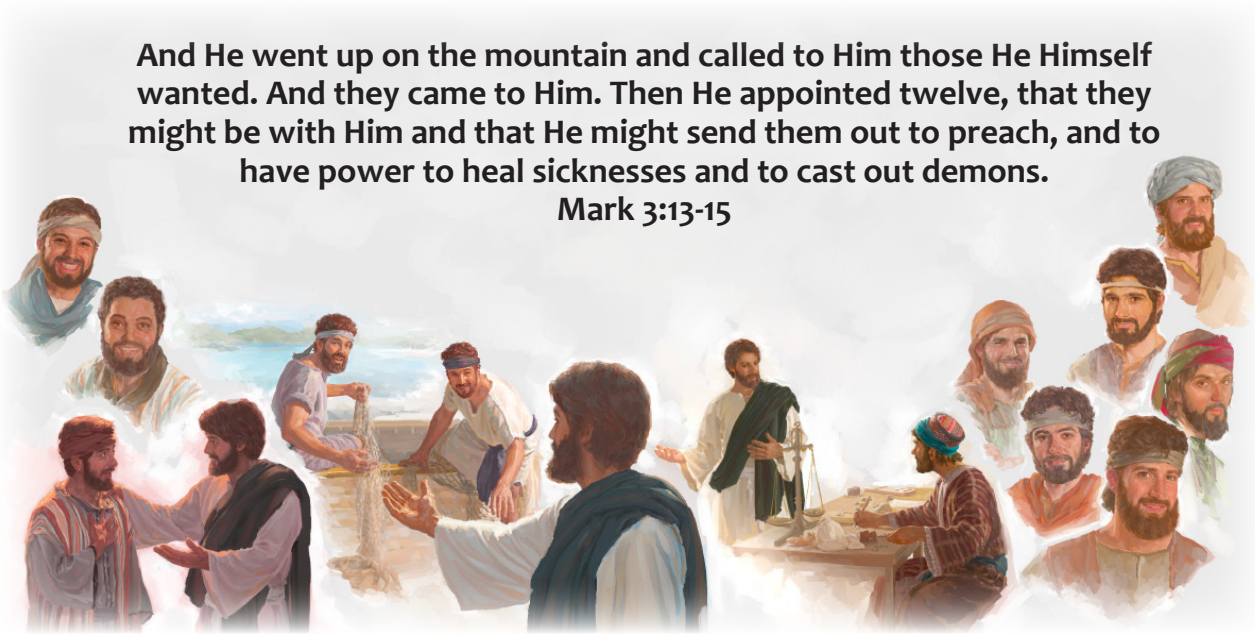
Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself, and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.

Concerning this choice of the twelve, we learn that, while under various circumstances the Lord called each individually to forsake all and follow him, which they promptly did, (See Matt. 4:17-22; Mark 1:16-20; 3:13-19; Luke 5:9-11) there was also a special occasion upon which he dedicated them to their office as apostles. Of this Luke gives an account, saying that prior to this event our Lord withdrew to a mountain to pray —-evidently to take counsel of God with reference to the interests of the prospective Church; and that he continued all night in prayer—- "And when it was day, he called unto him his **disciples** [Greek, **mathetas**, learners or pupils]; and **of them** he chose **twelve**, whom also he named **apostles** [**apostolos**—-ones sent forth]." —-Luke 6:12,13. Thus the twelve were marked as a distinct and separate class among the Lord's disciples. Verse 17 also makes the distinction very clear between these twelve and the other disciples.

The other disciples, not so chosen, were also beloved of the Lord, and were doubtless in full sympathy with this appointment, recognizing it as in the interests of the work in general. And in making the choice the Lord doubtless took cognizance, not only of the willingness of heart on the part of these twelve, but also of the circumstances and fitness of the individuals for the pioneer work that was before them. Thus, for instance, when he called the sons of Zebedee to leave all and follow him, he did not call their father. The following was to be, not merely a mental following of his doctrines, etc., but the leaving of business, home, friends, and earthly plans and prospects, etc., to go about with him or under his direction in the work of the Lord.

That our Lord at that time revealed much of the great importance attaching to his solemn setting apart of the twelve, is not at all probable, as it would have been impossible for them to comprehend it then; but these dear brethren, chosen from the humbler walks of life to be the Lord's special ambassadors, appreciated their privilege, notwithstanding the facts that privation and persecution would certainly be their immediate reward, and that the reward of the future could not then be clearly discerned.

Our Lord's object in selecting the twelve at that time was that he might begin with them a course of instruction and training which would fit them for their future work as apostles; for they did not fully enter upon that work until after the day of Pentecost. After their ordination the twelve were fully under the Lord's direction and much in his company; and they were careful students of his character, his gospel and his methods.



The Apostle declares that other foundation can no man lay than that is laid—Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 3:11) Upon this foundation our Lord, as the Father's representative, began to rear his Church, and in so doing he called twelve apostles—not by accident, but by design, just as the twelve tribes of Israel were not twelve by accident, but in conformity to the divine plan. Not only did the Lord not choose more than those twelve apostles for that position, but he has never given authority since for any more —barring the fact that Judas, having proved himself unworthy of a position amongst the twelve, fell from his place and was succeeded by the Apostle Paul.

We notice with what care the Lord watched over the apostles—his carefulness for Peter, his praying for him in the hour of his trial, and his special appeals to him afterward to feed his sheep and his lambs. We note also his care for doubting Thomas and his willingness to demonstrate to him thoroughly the fact of his resurrection. Of the twelve, he lost none save the son of perdition—and his deflection was already foreknown to the Lord and foretold in the Scriptures.

Nor can we imagine any need of more apostles; for we still have those twelve with us —their testimony and the fruit of their labors—in a much more convenient form than had those who were personally with them during their ministry. The records of their ministries are with us; their records of the Lord's words, miracles, etc. Their discourses on the various topics of Christian doctrine in their epistles are in our hands today in a most satisfactory manner. These things are "sufficient," as the Apostle explains "that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished." (2 Tim. 3:17) R. 1521, F209, F210

There is a difference between apostleship and discipleship. There are but "twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. 21:14), but the number of disciples is considerably larger. The word *disciple* signifies pupil or learner; and all who are now being called of the Lord, all who are now being caught as acceptable fish under the present arrangement are those who desire to be taught of the Lord and willingly respond to his teachings. R. 3308

Little Girl, Arise!

Mark 5:21-43

Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him, and He was by the sea. And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying,
"My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live." So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him.

Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well."

Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said,
"Who touched My clothes?"

But His disciples said to Him,
"You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?' " *

And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.

And He said to her,
"Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said,
"Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue,
"Do not be afraid. Only believe."

And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them,
"Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping."

And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her,
"Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise."

Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat.

*Luke tells us that it was Peter who spoke for the disciples and asked Jesus this question: *And Jesus said, "Who touched Me?" When all denied it, **Peter** and those with him said, "Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?' " Luke 8:45*

Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue in Capernaum, our Lord's home city, knew Jesus well. He sometimes called upon him to read the Sabbath lesson. (Luke 4:16.) On a previous occasion with others he entreated the Lord on behalf of the centurion's servant. (Luke 7:4.) Now affliction had invaded Jairus' home. His only daughter, twelve years old, was dying. The Master had been absent across the sea. Amongst the throng awaiting him was Jairus, who, because of his prominence as a representative man, was properly given first audience. He manifested his faith not merely by his request that the Lord would come and heal his daughter, but also by his conduct in prostrating himself, figuratively expressing his homage, obedience and faith. He had left the daughter in a dying condition and urging haste.

Jairus was evidently a man of considerable influence in his community, for to be a ruler of the synagogue meant, in the custom of that time, that he was also a member of the local Sanhedrin, the court which tried certain classes of offenders,

preserved general order, convened the assembly, etc. It was while Jesus was at the house of Matthew, enjoying the banquet which Matthew had intended should bring his publican friends in contact with the Master, and probably toward the conclusion of the banquet, that Jairus arrived on the scene to beseech our Lord for the recovery of his daughter. In the account as given by Matthew (9:18) the ruler is represented as saying that his daughter was already dead, while in the accounts [of Mark and Luke], the implication is that although she was in an extreme condition life still remained. The probability is that at the time Jairus left his child she was in an extremely critical condition, and that he surmised that by the time he was talking with the Lord she was quite probably dead—(and such was the case and the servants already enroute to notify Jairus). Quite possibly Jairus mentioned the matter from this standpoint: She was at the point of death when I left her; she is no doubt dead now, but come and lay thy hands on her that she may be healed and live. It was a wonderful exhibition of faith, and one which our Lord evidently fully appreciated, for he did not hesitate to go with him.

A Word on Faith

No essential element of Christian character is given greater prominence in the Scriptures than faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." In this requirement we see the condescending grace of our heavenly Father, who, though so far above us, yet, like a tender parent, desires the reciprocal love and implicit confidence of his intelligent creatures. Since Christ is the appointed agent of God in his dealings with men, whom God bids all men to honor, even as they honor the Father, and since he is the appointed way of access to God, faith in Christ is necessarily a part of our faith in God. Those who believe in Christ, believe the testimony which God gave of his Son through the prophets and through Christ's own teachings and the mighty works which God wrought by him, to the end that men might believe, having a sure and abundant ground for confidence; so that faith might not be mere credulity, but a reasonable thing.

Because so many Christian people ignore the proper definition of faith many candid minds are repelled from Christianity, refusing, they tell us, to believe absurdities. We urge Christian people to a more rigid examination of their faith in God and in the Bible, that, as the Apostle says, We may be able to "give a reason for the hope [the faith], that is within us." (1 Pet. 3:15.) We owe this to ourselves, as well as to those whom we would endeavor to interest in God's Word. In the light now shining upon God's Word it is possible, as it was in the days of the Apostles, for the man of God to be "thoroughly furnished" and able "to rightly divide the Word of Truth" and to show to his friends and neighbors solid, logical grounds for each item of his faith.
R. 1938 and R. 4588

It was during this journey from the home of Matthew to the home of Jairus, a great throng of people accompanying him, that the poor woman who had an issue of blood twelve years, and had spent all that she had and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, conceived the thought that if she could but touch the hem of Jesus' garment she should be cured—and by the exercise of her faith in this manner was healed. We can imagine the feelings of Jairus in consequence of this delay; while it added to his faith in the power of Jesus, it at the same time tested his faith in respect to the recovery of his child. The test became more severe, because just at this juncture messengers arrived from his wife, saying that the child was dead, and that it would therefore be unnecessary to trouble the great Teacher.

Similar are the Lord's providential dealings with many of his people: he gives us a ground for faith, and then, as we exercise that faith and act in harmony with it, he gives fresh corroboration; meanwhile testing it, by permitting various difficulties, contrary suggestions, doubts, fears, etc. —not only such as would arise in our minds, but such as would be brought to us through others, sometimes those nearest and dearest. Yet our experiences have been that in all such trials of faith the Lord has been ready to speak peace, comfort and full assurance to our hearts, if we would but listen to his words. So it was with Jairus. When the servants arrived, and said, Hope is gone, submit to the inevitable; Jesus also spoke a word, saying,

Be not afraid. Only believe.

O, how much there is in faith!

Jesus when he had come to Jairus' house, permitted only Peter, James and John to accompany him as witnesses of the power of God. The favor manifested toward these three apostles on so many occasions is not to be esteemed as simply a selfish partiality, but rather as an indication that these three who were specially zealous amongst the apostles were further advanced in spiritual things, and best able to appreciate the privileges granted them. Their selection was but another manifestation of what our Lord called attention to in one of his parables as being the divine principle of government, viz., that "to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly" —to him that hath used, and profited by divine favor most faithfully, shall proportionately more and larger favors be granted; because he more than others has by his faithfulness become capable of enjoying and appreciating and profiting by additional favors. The Lord evidently loves fervency (warmth) of spirit or disposition.

The journey both ways had consumed considerable time, and the preparations for the burial were far advanced at the time of our Lord's arrival, for it was the Jewish custom to have a speedy burial after death. The hired mourners (whom Matthew designates "minstrels") were already there, and the usual unseemly tumult of the time was in progress. Our Lord rebuked the mourners and spoke of the maid as sleeping, just as he similarly said of Lazarus, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; I go that

I may awake him." This aroused the laugh of scorn, his hearers not appreciating what he meant, even as the disciples did not appreciate the word "sleep," when used in connection with Lazarus, until our Lord said plainly, "Lazarus is dead."

Death would not have been even figuratively called sleep, except for the provision for a resurrection, nor would it have been appropriate had no awakening of the dead been intended. And although this awakening could not take place without a redemption, and although the redemption price securing the awakening was not paid until Calvary, nevertheless all of God's people who had faith in his promise made to Abraham ("In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed") realized that what God had promised he would surely fulfill, and that since millions of the families of the earth had gone down into death prior to the promise, and before the coming of the Seed of Abraham, therefore the fulfillment of that promise signified a general awakening from the sleep of death for all mankind---in order that all might have the opportunity of being blessed by the glorious Seed of Abraham.

It was from this standpoint that our Lord spoke and acted; he was already, since his baptism at Jordan, in process of paying the ransom---his entire life was consecrated and had been accepted of the Father, although the sacrifice had not yet been finished, and was not completed until on Calvary he cried in his dying moment, "It is finished." As a result of the finishing of the ransom there, our Lord declared that in due time the prison-house of death would be opened and that all the sleeping prisoners would come forth; he declared, "All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and come forth;" they that have done well (those now on trial, and approved by the Lord as overcomers) unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done ill (those who have not escaped the condemnation, nor been approved of God) unto a resurrection by judgment-trial. —John 5:28,29.

That judgment trial will be their blessed opportunity of coming to a knowledge of the truth respecting the divine character and plan, and if they will of coming into harmony with it, and by the development of character during the Millennium reaching full perfection of restitution at its close. Meantime, they sleep— "sleep in Jesus," in the sense that a hope of awakening in the resurrection morning centers in Jesus by divine arrangement, through the atonement sacrifice which by the grace of God, he gave a ransom for all. —1 Tim. 2:6.

Thus we see that the future life held out before us in the Scriptures is a resurrection hope. In harmony with this the Apostle declared, "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead am I called in question." (Acts 23:6), and again it is declared that his constant theme in preaching was "Jesus and the resurrection." (Acts 17:18.) There is no hope of a future life without a resurrection, and there is no hope of a resurrection except in Jesus---that he died for our sins, and thus paid the death penalty which was against us, and thus permitted the wages of sin, death, to become merely a temporary "sleep," from which he will awaken mankind, that they may be blessed under all the great and wonderful privileges of His Kingdom during the Millennial age, otherwise in Scripture called the day of judgment, or trial for the world, as this present Gospel age is the day of trial for the Church.



Christ Raising the Daughter of Jairus by Greg Olsen

When ready, in the presence of his three chosen disciples and the father and mother of the maiden, Jesus took her by the hand, saying,

Talitha cumi.

These words are in the Aramaic language spoken by the common people of that time. "*Talitha*, in the ordinary dialect of the people, is a word of endearment to a young maiden, so that the words are equivalent to 'Rise, my child.'"

The maid awakened to life and consciousness. She did not come back from heaven or from hell, but merely awakened out of the sleep of death, and renewed the experiences of life as before. Such an awakening from sleep—such a restoration of the life forces that had been temporarily suspended, is of the nature of a resurrection, but is not a resurrection. To have resurrected her would have meant to have lifted her completely out of death in every sense of the word, and our Lord did nothing of this kind. He merely awakened her, leaving her upon the same plane of death on which she had been born, and had thus far lived for twelve years.

The statement of Luke 8:55, when relieved of the mists of a false theology, is very clear. "And her spirit came again," simply signifies, "And her breath returned," and is so rendered in the **Emphatic Diaglott,** the Greek word "**pneuma**," translated "spirit" in the common version, signifying breath, wind, or the spirit or breath of life. With the reinstituting of the breathing process and the healing of the physical organism came reanimation, restored intelligence, and the dead lived again. Thus the Lord rewarded even the weak faith, and gave them additional and overwhelming evidence to strengthen and establish their faith. The Lord did not expect or desire the people to have faith without good substantial evidence upon which to base it; but he did desire and reward the faith that was exercised to the extent of the evidence. A faith without substantial evidence upon which to base it, is mere credulity, and generally degenerates into gross superstition unworthy of the intelligence which God has given us.
R. 4588, R. 2617, R. 1938

Jesus said: Come

Matthew 14:22-31

Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying,

"It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.

But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying,
"Be of good cheer! It is I. Do not be afraid."

And Peter answered Him and said,
"Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."

So He said, "Come."



Jesus Walking on Water

And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"

And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him,
"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

After the multitudes had been fed, toward the close of the day, they evidently were loth to leave the company of one so able and willing to care for their necessities, and probably it was to expedite their dispersion that our Lord urged the apostles to start in their boat for Capernaum.

Our Lord, after dispersing the multitude, sought the solitude of the mountain in prayer. He needed such fellowship with the heavenly Father for the refreshment of his own zeal, for the keeping warm of his own love and devotion, which was the basis of his consecration and his daily sacrificing of himself as a man, even unto death. We may reasonably suppose that he never neglected to seek the Father's face; but these brief seasons of worship and prayer daily were evidently supplemented by occasions like the one mentioned in this lesson, in which our Lord spent, apparently, considerable of the night in prayer and communion with the Father.

While our Lord was thus holding communion with the Father, the apostles rowing the boat were having difficulty to make headway, a strong head-wind having arisen, which made the lake very rough, boisterous, billowy. John, who was one of those in the boat, tells us that they had only gotten about twenty-five or thirty furlongs (two and a half to three miles) from the shore, in the several hours they had been rowing. This was what is termed the fourth watch of the night, viz., between three and six o'clock in the morning. While thus rowing hard, worn and sleepy, they saw the figure of a man near them, walking on the water, and apparently intending to pass their boat. (Mark 6:48-50.) Some of them cried out in fear, thinking that they had seen a supernatural being, and that it foreboded some calamity, but it was Jesus who spoke to them, and set at rest their fears.

Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by. And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out, for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, "Be of good cheer! It is I. Do not be afraid."
Mark 6:48-50

St. Matthew gives an additional feature of this lesson not recorded by St. Mark. He tells us that when St. Peter learned that it was Jesus who walked upon the sea, he requested the Lord to sanction his walking on the water to Him. The boldness of Peter's faith was most strikingly illustrated by his request that the Lord should bid him walk on the water; and having received the permission, his faith was so strong that he did walk for a few steps, until seemingly appalled by his own temerity and the boisterousness of the water, he began to sink, and cried to the Lord for help: "Save, or I perish!" How true it is of all God's people that like St. Peter they would like to do some wonderful thing to show their faith in the Lord! And how like St. Peter's are their experiences, often! They would utterly fail did not the Lord

interpose for their rescue. However, as the Lord found no fault with St. Peter for his effort, we are bound to admire the degree of faith and courage which he manifested.

Much has been said respecting St. Peter's rashness and the difficulties he repeatedly got into. The criticism is surely to some extent justified, but we are to remember that the Master loved him greatly, partly on account of his zeal, partly on account of the energy which on several occasions got him into difficulty. One thing should always be remembered in his favor, that although he was the oldest of the Apostles he was evidently one of the most meek and most teachable of them all. Of his mistakes he made a **mirror**, and thus, learning to know himself more particularly, he was safeguarded through the many dangers natural to his temperament; and he stands forth in the Scriptures as one of the very noblest of the Apostles.

The wisdom of St. Peter's course is illustrated in a little verse published in the ***New York Sun.*** The poem tells that the three fault-finders were provided each with a crystal, to do with as he pleased; and this was the result:

THE THREE FAULT FINDERS

The *fool* contrived of *his* a *lens*,
Wherein, to gloating eyes,
The smallest blot that could be found
Was magnified in size.

The *just man* made of *his* a *pane*,
All clear without a flaw;
Nor summer sun nor winter rain
Affected what he saw.

The *wise man* pondered long and well
How best to search, to aid,
Then, taking up the crystal given,
Of *his* a *mirror* made.

--New York Sun, R. 5096

Realizing, as we all must, that our Lord has supernaturally fed us with spiritual food, and that during the darkness of the night-time which precedes the Millennial dawn and sunlight there will be storms and difficulties arising which would overwhelm us without the Lord's aid. We are to remember that not only the natural winds and waves obey his power and command, but that all the storms and billows of trouble and persecution which may impede and weary us are amenable to his control. The more we are able to realize this, the more of joy and peace we will experience, because the stronger will be our faith in him who is able to succor us and who has promised eventually to do so, and that meantime all things shall be overruled for our highest welfare, if we abide in him. R. 5095 and R. 2650

Why Did You Doubt?

Matthew 14:31-33

And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him,
"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying,
"Truly You are the Son of God."

Respecting its heroes the Bible, unlike any other religious book, tells the naked truth. [The account here] emphasizes both the strength and the weakness of St. Peter's natural disposition. We identify the character here pictured as the same which was displayed on other occasions—noble and courageous, but rather forward and boastful.

St. Peter with the other disciples in a fishing-boat was on a boisterous sea. Jesus had declined to go with them in the boat, withdrawing himself to the mountain for a season of prayer. The boat had not yet reached her destination, when the disciples saw the Master walking upon the water and drawing near. At first they were all affrighted; then reassurance came from his word, and finally St. Peter asked the Lord's permission that he might walk to him on the water. This permission was granted, and we cannot doubt that, had the Apostle maintained his faith, he would have reached the Lord in safety, for the same power that had exercised itself in him and in the other disciples for the healing of sick and the casting out of demons was absolutely able to keep him from sinking into the water.

Faith is a matter of cultivation, of development. The same apostles who cried out in terror when the storm was upon the Sea of Galilee gradually grew stronger and stronger in faith until, as the records show, they could and did trust the Lord in his absence and where they could not trace him. Similarly it should be a part of our daily lesson to cultivate trust in the Lord, and to think of the experiences in the past in our lives and all of these lessons in his Word, that thus our faith in him may become rooted and grounded. R. 3338

But while St. Peter's faith was stronger than that of the others and stronger than ours today, in that he even attempted to walk on the water, nevertheless it was not strong enough. As his eye caught a glimpse of the boisterousness of the sea his faith began to fail and he began to sink. The Master, however, caught him, saying,

O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt!

The lesson of the occasion being ended, the wind ceased. All the disciples then offered the Lord their worship, realizing afresh that he was the Son of God in power; that even the winds and the waves obeyed him.

It is safe to say that all sane people recognize themselves as imperfect and hence asunworthy the recognition of the great Creator. They cannot commend themselves to him as being worthy of his favor and life eternal. It is when this conviction of unworthiness becomes deep-seated; when the realization is keen that "the wage of sin is death," that the heart is most likely to realize the value of life eternal and to cry unto the Lord for deliverance from darkness, from sin's bondage and from its death sentence. To all such the Savior stands ready to lend a helping hand, as in St. Peter's case. He will not reproach such for their sins if they have repented of them and turned to righteousness. Rather, he will say, "Why did you not come sooner? I was quite willing to aid you as soon as you cried."

As our Lord came to the disciples in the midst of the storm, in the fourth watch of the night (that is, in the early morning), so his second coming in the Millennial dawn is to the Church and to "help her," rescue her from her toil and weariness and peril, as the Prophet says,

God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved.
God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.
Psalm 46:5

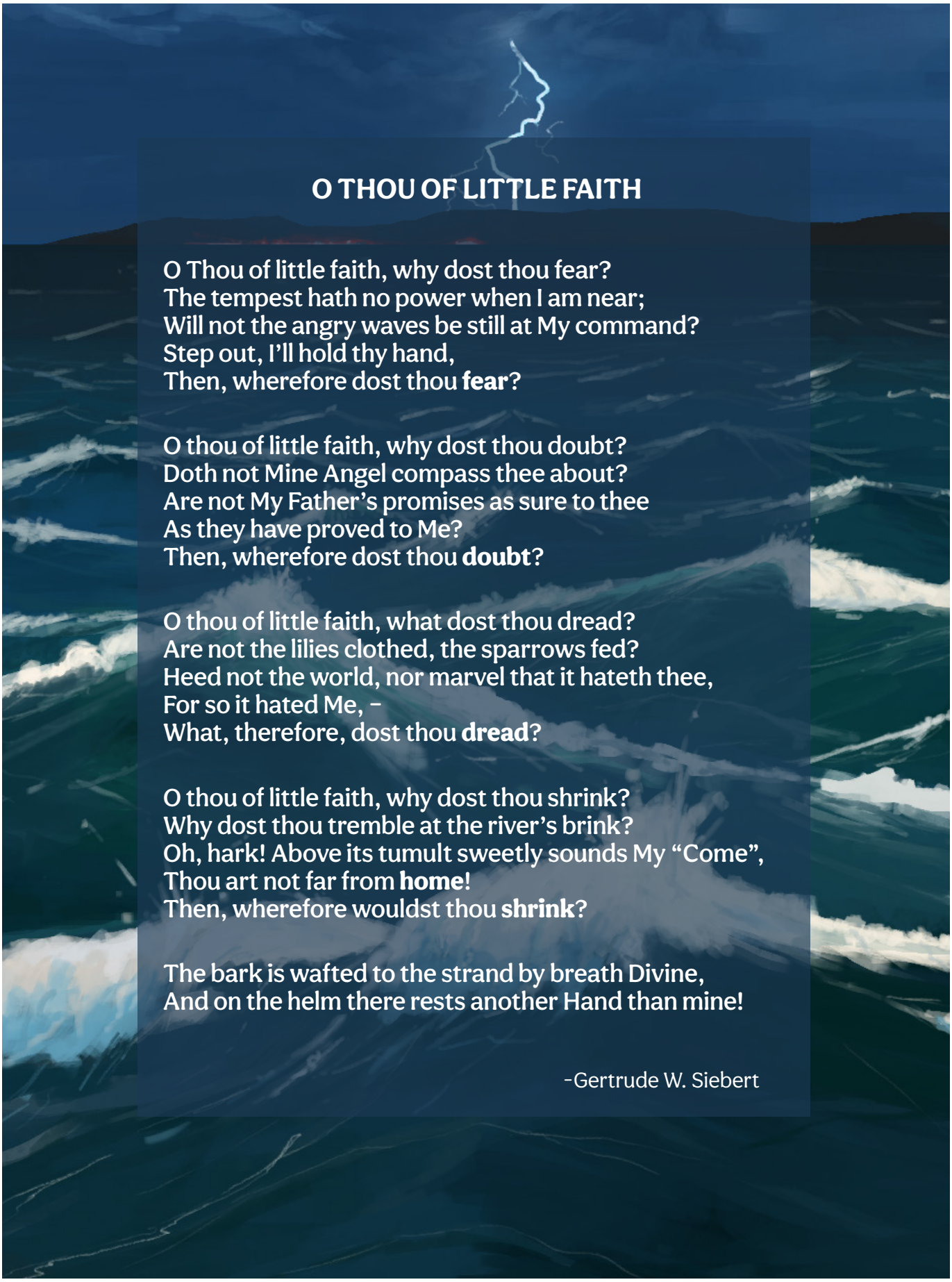
And as the manner of our Lord's coming to his disciples was different from that they had expected, so the manner of his second advent differs from what has been expected, and Peter would seem to represent a class living now, in the end of the age, who being fully convinced of the Lord's presence are privileged to walk to him by faith. But as Peter's faith was unequal to the occasion, except as the Lord came to his rescue, so all of the faithful now will need the Master's hand stretched to their relief, otherwise they would sink in discouragement, because of the lack of faith.

The lesson here, in harmony with its presentations elsewhere in the Scriptures, is that little progress can be made by the Lord's people until the Master himself shall join them; and that then their blessedness and privileges will be proportioned to the measure of their faith. How strongly this speaks to us, then, of continued faithfulness and of growth in faith, not in ourselves but in the Lord, and of his ultimate deliverance of all who put their trust in him.

Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going.
John 6:21

In John's account we learn that as soon as the Lord and Peter got into the boat, immediately the wind and storm ceased and the ship was at the harbor. So it will be with the Lord's people, the "little flock;" so soon as their faith has been fully tested at the Lord's second presence, he will join their number, and immediately the trials and storms, difficulties and oppositions will be at an end, and the desired haven of heavenly condition will have been reached, the Kingdom will have come.

Courage, then, dear brother-mariners on the sea of experience, seeking to make your calling and election sure! Let us note carefully the Master's words to Peter as especially applicable to ourselves, viz., that all that will hinder us from walking out to meet the Lord is lack of faith. "O thou of little faith: wherefore didst thou doubt?" R. 2649 and R. 4618



O THOU OF LITTLE FAITH

O Thou of little faith, why dost thou fear?
The tempest hath no power when I am near;
Will not the angry waves be still at My command?
Step out, I'll hold thy hand,
Then, wherefore dost thou **fear**?

O thou of little faith, why dost thou doubt?
Doth not Mine Angel compass thee about?
Are not My Father's promises as sure to thee
As they have proved to Me?
Then, wherefore dost thou **doubt**?

O thou of little faith, what dost thou dread?
Are not the lilies clothed, the sparrows fed?
Heed not the world, nor marvel that it hateth thee,
For so it hated Me, –
What, therefore, dost thou **dread**?

O thou of little faith, why dost thou shrink?
Why dost thou tremble at the river's brink?
Oh, hark! Above its tumult sweetly sounds My "Come",
Thou art not far from **home**!
Then, wherefore wouldst thou **shrink**?

The bark is wafted to the strand by breath Divine,
And on the helm there rests another Hand than mine!

-Gertrude W. Siebert

The Words of Eternal Life

John 6:66-68

From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve,
"Do you also want to go away?"

But Simon Peter answered Him,
"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

During the Lord's ministry some who followed him for a time, failed to enter into the spirit of his teachings, failed to get the eyes of their understanding opened because their hearts were not in the proper attitude, and they turned away from Jesus, saying, "These are hard sayings; who can hear them?" The way was too narrow for them; they had not a sufficiency of consecration nor a sufficiency of love to lead them to full self-surrender and the taking of the Lord's yoke. It was then that the Lord turned to some of his faithful who had remained and who had taken his yoke to follow him. Jesus questioned them, saying,

Will ye also go away?

There is just a tinge of disappointment in our Master's words here recorded. Why did his words express sadness at the loss of a number from his company? It was because he was true and noble and sympathetic, and loved his friends, and seeing the hour approaching when the Shepherd would be smitten and all the sheep be scattered (as it was afterward fulfilled when "all forsook him and fled"), the lonely sadness crept over him and found expression in the words, Will ye also go away? Love of sympathy, fellowship of friends, etc., are not weaknesses, but, on the contrary, are elements of a true character. But it would have shown weakness had our Lord allowed the turning back of his disciples to have influenced or swerved his course from the path of sacrifice marked out for him in the Father's plan. No such weakness ever manifested itself.

It will be remembered that the words of our text were called forth by a certain **sifting** of the discipleship. Our Lord's ministry had progressed considerably: at first, the people hung upon his words and said, "Never man spake like this man," and "great multitudes followed him." But towards the close of his ministry, as the jealousy and animosity of the "Doctors of Divinity" and the Pharisees began to manifest itself, he became less popular, and in our context we find that many of his hearers were leaving him, and he said, "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

It may sound harsh to some, because of their misconception of the subject, when we say that the Lord's message and leading were as much intended to shake off and repel one class, as to attract and to hold another class. That would be inconceivable, if the ones repelled and shaken off were understood to be shaken into a hell of eternal

torment, and such is the general misconception of the subject. On the contrary the attraction and the drawing was to the Kingdom, and the repulsion was from the Kingdom, and the sifting and separating of our Lord's day—and since and at the present time—is to the intent that the Lord may gather out and separate from those who nominally profess to be his followers.

The Apostle Peter's words,

Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life,

are full of meaning. He had known what it meant to seek God's favor and everlasting life through keeping the Law, and, like most of the Jews of the humbler class, had been discouraged, finding himself condemned both by the doctrines of the Pharisees and by his own conscience. Doubtless, also, he knew something of the various heathen philosophies respecting a future life; and, if so, he knew them to be merely human speculations or guesses.

But for three years he had known Jesus and heard his words on this subject of eternal life. His teaching was not speculative guessing as to what might be. "He taught them with authority, and not as the scribes." Nor did he teach them to hope for eternal life through the keeping of the Law (which they knew to be an impossibility). His teaching, on the contrary, was different from that of every other teacher. He taught them that he had come into the world, not to be served or honored and titled, but to serve men and to finally give his life a ransom or purchase-price for the forfeited lives of all who lost the right to life in Adam's trial and disobedience. (Matt. 20:28.) His teaching was that as a result of this ransom-sacrifice, which, by divine love and arrangement, he was about to give for all, all shall have the opportunity of everlasting life through obedience under the gracious terms of the New Covenant; and that to this end not only they, but also, "All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and come forth, and they that hear [obey] shall live" —attain perfect life. (John 5:25,28,29.)

Peter had heard this simple and beautiful gospel—this, the only real good tidings of everlasting life; he recognized Jesus as the Messiah sent of God to be the Life-giver to the world, the true light that shall ultimately lighten every man that cometh into the world. —John 1:9.

What wonder, then, in view of this, that Peter answered as he did, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Peter's faith and hope had found in the doctrines of Christ a foundation and anchorage which they could not find elsewhere.

And the same is true of all intelligent believers today, in proportion as they have heard and understood the wonderful words of life, of which Christ's death is the central theme, the hub, whose spokes are the love and favor of God, including all his exceeding great and precious promises reaching to the circumference—everlasting life. Having once seen the truth, having once heard the good tidings—the words of everlasting life—for what would they exchange it? NS382, R. 1710, R. 2257

Wonderful Words of Life

Sing them over again to me,
Wonderful words of life!
Let me more of their beauty see,
Wonderful words of life!
Words of life and beauty,
Teach me faith and duty;

Christ the blessed One gives to all
Wonderful words of life!
Brother, list to his loving call,
Wonderful words of life!
All so freely given,
Blessed boon from heaven,
Beautiful words! wonderful words!
Wonderful words of life!

Sweetly echoes the gospel call,
Wonderful words of life!
Off'ring pardon and peace to all,
Wonderful words of life!
Praise the Lord forever
For these words of favor –
Beautiful words! wonderful words!
Wonderful words of life!

--Philip P. Bliss (1874)

A Pivotal Conversation

Matthew 16:13-20

When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying,
"Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

So they said,
"Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."



Peter's Great Confession, Library of Congress Repository

Jesus answered and said to him,

"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

You Are The Christ

"Thou art the Christ [God's Anointed One: Hebrew, ***the Messiah***], the Son of the living God." This answer proved that Jesus had rightly judged that the time was ripe for such a confession of him amongst his apostles, and for the first time he intimated to them that their surmises on the subject were correct---that he was more than Elijah, Jeremiah, or any of the prophets---that he was the long-promised Messiah.

The disciples had told Jesus the common talk respecting Himself. He then asked them, "Who say ye that I am?" St. Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This was the first public declaration of Jesus' Messiahship. Even the disciples had only now come to recognize their Teacher as the long-promised Messiah. Jesus answered, "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonas; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but My Father in Heaven. Thou art Peter [a stone, ready for the spiritual Temple, the first one to publicly acknowledge Jesus], and upon this rock [the Truth just declared, that I am Messiah] I will build My Church."

In the Greek the word Peter signifies a stone of moderate size, while the word here rendered rock signifies a mass of stone---a foundation. Our Lord Jesus Christ evidently meant that St. Peter's statement was a recognition of Himself as the great Foundation of the Divine Plan---Messiah. Upon that foundation truth, that Jesus is Christ, the Church would be built; and St. Peter was the first living stone to build himself upon that foundation by believing and confessing Christ.

That the Apostle Peter had this same thought respecting the matter is evident, for in his epistle he speaks of the true children of God as living stones for God's temple, built upon Christ as the great foundation:

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices.
1 Peter 2:4-5

It was this great fact, that our Lord declared to be the truth, which would build his Church. And it is so today: Every true member of the Church built upon the true foundation is resting his faith not upon Peter, nor upon the human Church organization but upon this great truth that Jesus was the Son of God and the Messiah who had so long been promised, whose mission it was in God's due time to bless the whole world by destroying sin and the wages of sin, death. R. 3340 and NS194

The word *Christ* signifies *The Anointed*. The Bible declares that the Anointed Lord shall be the Great King, Prophet and Priest, whose Kingdom shall be under the whole heavens---a Kingdom which shall last for a thousand years; and shall destroy sin and all who love sin; and which shall lift up all humanity willing to return into harmony with God. According to the Scriptures, this Jesus is---the Messiah. R. 5120

Blessed Are You

Peter, the Apostle, was a grand character, as this lesson well illustrates; yet, like all strong characters, he had proportionate opportunities and liabilities to misuse his strength for evil. This lesson, relating considerably to him, points a moral respecting the necessity for meekness, humility, and wise direction of those who possess strength of character.

Although we may safely assume that Peter spoke for all of the apostles, in harmony with our Lord's question, nevertheless, the fact that he was the spokesman would imply that he was the most thoroughly imbued with the sentiment that he expressed. His statement is quite comprehensive, too: not only did he recognize Jesus as the Messiah, but he recognized his divine authority and paternity; and while it is possible that Peter meant to say "the Son of the living God" —the Son of the God who is the author of all life—yet it is probable that he meant more than this. It is probable that he meant, Thou art the Messiah, the Son of God, the Living One, —the one who has a right to life according to the Law, while all others, being imperfect, are under condemnation of the Law and under sentence of death.

Evidently it was a refreshment of heart to our Lord to have this full and frank statement from Peter. One, at least, of his disciples had profited by the lessons of the preceding three years, and had come to the point of full assurance of faith in him: and the others, while less expressive, were probably making progress nevertheless, and would be greatly helped and strengthened and built up by this good confession.

Our Lord's response, "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jona," does not so much signify, I wish or will grant a blessing upon you because of this confession, but rather, You have been blessed of God greatly in that you have been enabled to discern this great truth, hidden from so many. Flesh and blood (mankind in general) do not so believe, and could not have so taught you nor convinced you; you have been drawn of my Father in heaven, and through responding to the leadings of his providence the eyes of your understanding have been opened that you are thus able to see and appreciate this great truth. R. 2656

It was not that St. Peter had experienced a special vision or revelation, but such a great spiritual fact as was then under consideration, could be duly appreciated only by those who were specially favored of the Father. Indeed, it is evident that the same principle still operates, for we read, "No man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me draw him." Our primary drawing and calling is of the Father up to the time when we accept his grace in Christ and make our consecration to do his will and receive the spirit of adoption into his family as God's children; we are then put into the school of Christ to learn of him. Let us learn the lesson that the special blessings always come, not only from believing in Christ, but also from confessing him to and before others. R. 4645

Upon This Rock

Now, after his disciples had been intimately associated with him for three years, and after John the Baptist had been dead for a year, the time had come for Jesus to prepare the disciples for the ignominy and death which he knew to be in store for him. But even then the matter was approached in a wise and careful manner. Our Lord would draw out the apostles and seek to crystalize in their minds the thought which he knew already was forming or formed. Leading up to his intention he inquired respecting the general voice of the people as to who he was. The answer that some thought him John the Baptist risen from the dead, and others thought him Jeremiah or one of the other great prophets risen from the dead (Matthew's account), showed that the public mind was being exercised—was noting that he was not an impostor. As we read later on, some of the people were ready to inquire, "When Messiah cometh, will he do greater works than this man does?" All of these sentiments indicated the wisdom of the course pursued by our Lord, and that it was taking effect—that instead of being ridiculed, he was respected by the people, some of whom even thought to take him by force to make him their King.

Now the Lord addressed his disciples as implying that they were separated in his mind from the rest of the people, and should have a clearer knowledge of him than others, and his question is: "Whom say ye that I am?" —with the intimate acquaintance that you have had, what is your opinion?

Here Simon Peter's impulsive zeal, which sometimes led him into difficulties and errors, led him to a very warm and prompt expression of his full conviction that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. And Simon Peter answered and said,

Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!

Such a prompt and full profession of his faith brought the immediate reward of the Master's approval. The conviction thus impressed upon his mind was not such as the carnal mind would arrive at, but such as the mind could gain only by submitting itself fully to the spirit of God. Peter and all the other apostles had done this, but Peter, being the most prompt to confess it, received the first and warmest commendation and reward.

Then followed a blessing, a prophecy of coming usefulness, partly, at least, the result of this good confession, as it was the result of a proper condition of heart: — "Thou art Peter [**petros**, a stone, a rock] and upon this rock [**petra**—this great stone or rocky mass—the great truth which you have confessed, namely, my Messiahship] will I build my Church."

The rock upon which the Church is built is this confession which St. Peter made. St. Peter himself was not the rock, but he was one of the living stones built by faith upon the rock of truth. It was this same Apostle who so beautifully explained the whole matter, assuring us that all consecrated believers are "living stones" in the temple of

God, whose foundation and capstone is Christ, in whom we are builded together through the operation of the holy Spirit. —1 Pet. 2:4-7.

This was probably the first intimation the Lord had given of his intention to build a Church, or that any period of time would elapse between the work he was then doing and the establishment of the Kingdom. This was a gradual way of bringing great matters to the attention of the apostles, —matters which necessarily would conflict with many of the ideas and hopes that already had taken possession of their hearts. R. 3339, R. 1760, R. 2656, R. 4645

The Church of Rome, as being the oldest of all human church systems, claims the name of Christ, and holds that Peter was its founder, but it can produce no evidence to this effect, for there was no Roman Catholic Church in existence until centuries after Peter's day. The primitive Church, authorized by our Lord and built upon the testimony of the apostles and through their ministry, after the day of Pentecost, was a very different institution from any of the present-day man-made, creed-bound and clergy-lorded systems. R. 2657

The great question of eighteen centuries ago is the great question of today! Who is Jesus? If, as some claim, He was merely a good man, a most able Teacher, then He was not The Christ, for The Christ, although the embodiment of all these qualities, was more, much more. To be The Christ, He must have been "the Man Christ Jesus," who gave Himself a Ransom-price for all, to be testified in due time. (I Tim. 2:5,6.) And this signifies that He must have been, not of ordinary birth, but extraordinary, born from above, because if born in the ordinary course of nature He would be like others of Adam's sons, subject to the sentence of death, and hence unable to save either Himself or others. But if He was The Christ, the Sent of God, who left the glory of the Father and was made flesh that He might "taste death for every man," then we behold Him as the great Redeemer of the world, whose death was necessary as a Ransom, or corresponding price, to secure the release of mankind from the death sentence and to make possible the resurrection of Adam and his race. R. 5120

The Gates of Hades

The expression, "Upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against it," is one that is much misunderstood. The gates of hell are not gates to some place of torture, nor gates to purgatory. They are, in the Greek, "gates of **hades**," and **hades** signifies a state or condition of death. The passage might well be translated, "The gates of the grave shall not prevail against it." That is to say, Christ Jesus invites the Church to **die** with him, to share in his sacrifice, in his death, and while, apparently, the gates of **hades have** prevailed against the Church, against God's people, for more than eighteen centuries, nevertheless, we have the assurance that they shall not forever prevail. The Master's assurance is that by his death he has become Lord of all and has the keys of death and hades. He has the right to open **hades**, the tomb, and to call forth all who have gone down into it. He assures us that he will do this, as he says, "All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man and shall come forth."

Nevertheless, for all these centuries it has required faith to believe that, by **dying** with Christ, his followers shall yet live with him---that sharing with him in his death they shall yet share with him in his resurrection to the glory and to the honor attaching to the divine nature. So, then, our Lord's words mean that there will be a resurrection from the grave, and since the Church is to be "a kind of first-fruits unto God of his creatures" (Jas. 1:18; Rev. 14:4), her resurrection means, indirectly, the uplifting of mankind, the opening of the grave to every member of the human family. R. 4645

"The gates of hell shall not prevail." This statement seems to some to favor the theory that eternal torment is the fate of all except the Church: yet such must view the text very superficially indeed, for with their view what picture would the words convey?

Note the reasonableness and beauty of the true interpretation of this language. The word hell here is in the Greek, hades, the same word that is elsewhere translated grave. In the Apostle's declaration respecting the resurrection and the deliverance of the Church from the grave, he exclaims, "O hades, where is thy victory?" He pictures thus the Church triumphing over hades, coming out of hades, out of the grave, out of the state of death. The same thought is connected with our Lord's resurrection: he is represented as bursting the bonds of death, bursting the restraints of sheol, of hades----by the Father's power. The gates of hades, the gates of the tomb, the strength of death which restrained him three days, was broken in his resurrection. This is the picture which our Lord presents. The Church in common with the world would go down into death, and this was an assurance to the apostles of the abundant deliverance which will be granted to the Church in the First Resurrection to glory, honor and immortality, to the conditions where the Second Death will have no power. R. 3789

The Keys of The Kingdom



The apostles, of course, could not understand our Lord's words at the time, as they did afterward, and as we now understand them. (John 7:39.) Nevertheless, these various declarations respecting the future immediately followed, our Lord declaring, "I will give thee the keys of the Kingdom of heaven." What a riddle this must have seemed to poor Peter and his associates! They would doubtless conclude that it meant that in view of Peter's confession he would make him grand treasurer of the Kingdom, or something of that kind; and only in the light of their fulfillment in subsequent events can we judge accurately the meaning of these words. But looking through the experiences of Peter and the Church, we find that there were two doors which required to be opened, and that Peter was used of the Lord in opening both of them, and hence that it was properly stated of him that he had the keys, the power, the opportunity, the authority to do the work in both instances; and he did it.

What the Lord meant is very simple, very beautiful; and we see exactly how it was fulfilled. He indicated that St. Peter, the first to confess Him, was to have a special honor in connection with the inauguration of the Church on earth. By the expression, "Kingdom of Heaven," is meant the Church, a class being called out of the world to become with Christ the ruling power of the world during the Millennium, through the great resurrection "change." —-1 Cor. 15:42,54.

The giving of the "keys" of the Kingdom to St. Peter has no reference to locks and bars of heaven over which St. Peter is the custodian. Jesus meant that St. Peter would be honored in being permitted to do an opening work in connection with the Church.The Bible shows us two different opening works and two different keys. The key is a symbol of power or authority or an initiative.

1 St. Peter used his first key of privilege on the day of Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit came upon the early waiting Church, it was St. Peter that used this key. Standing up with the eleven, he lifted up his voice, explained the situation and opened the door to the Church of Christ for the Jews, admonishing them of their opportunity to enter. He told of the merit of Christ's death and how He had risen and had ascended on High, and how forgiveness of sins was, therefore, preached in His name. —-Acts 2:14-36.

2 The second key to the Kingdom of Heaven—-the Church, the embryo Kingdom preparing for glory—-St. Peter used three and a half years later. Then the seventieth week of Divine favor prophetically appointed to the Jews expired, and the time came that the Gentiles might be fellow-heirs with the Jews of the same Promise. The opening work was with the household of Cornelius, to whom St. Peter preached Christ. The Lord blessed the preaching and granted the Holy Spirit to Cornelius and his family. Thus the Gentile door into the Kingdom was thrown wide open. —-Acts 10. R. 2657, SM465, R. 4645

• *See also p. 122*

— *Binding and Loosing in Heaven and Earth* —

St. Peter's commission that whatever things he should bind on earth should be bound in heaven and what things he should loose on earth should be loosed in heaven, is the same that was given to the other Apostles. (See Matt. 18:18.)

Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.
Matthew 18:18

It does not mean, of course, that the Lord has turned matters over to St. Peter and made him Lord of heaven and earth, nor that any or all of the Apostles were so honored. It simply means this:

God purposes to use his Apostles and to so hold up their hands, in all their affairs, that the whole Church may have confidence in them, and may recognize their teachings as of God. If they declared that certain of the commandments under the Jewish Law were not binding upon Christians, we must know that their statements were true, and that, similarly, in heaven, the release or change is recognized. And if they bound certain doctrines and teachings, we must know that those are bound and firmly established in heaven. In other words, we must recognize the Apostles as God's inerrant mouthpieces.

We understand these declarations not to be general and applicable to all of the Church, but chiefly to the apostles, on the strength of our Lord's words. (John 6:70; 15:16; Rev. 21:14.) We deny that the popes of Rome, or any other persons, ever have been apostles, or ever have exercised apostolic authority. In a word, we deny the central claim of Romanism and Episcopacy, viz., "Apostolic Succession."

We understand this investment of Peter and the other apostles with special authority to bind and to loose, to remit and to hold, to signify that God would specially control their utterances, so that their decisions and writings might properly be considered authoritative. Not that God bound himself to do and to decide according to the imperfect judgments of the apostles, but that he has guaranteed us that he would so guide and providentially overrule in the affairs and in the language of these chosen and faithful ones that his people might rely upon it that such things as the apostles fixed had the divine approval. For instance, it is at their mouth that we learn that we are justified from all sin through faith in the redemption; they did not make it so, but under divine direction they were guided in the stating of it so; and we may implicitly rely upon their statements, which, moreover, we find to be in full accord with the principles of righteousness and the various declarations of the divine Word. R. 4645 and R. 2657

What Do You Think of Christ?

This question, which came to Peter and his fellow-apostles, has been rung down through the centuries from that time until now, wherever the knowledge of the Lord Jesus has gone. It is a question which each one must eventually answer for himself. Thank God for this: the benighted heathen shall not be left in darkness, in ignorance of the only name given under heaven and amongst men whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12.) In due time this true Light shall lighten every man that cometh into the world. (John 1:9.) And with the question and with the light which makes possible an answer to the question comes a responsibility which none may shirk. Eventually every son and daughter of Adam must decide respecting the great Savior whom God has provided—each must accept or reject him as his Redeemer, his Savior, his Teacher, Priest and King, if he would enter into life; or, rejecting him intelligently and willfully, must die the Second Death—utter destruction.

The question has come to us who are the Lord's followers, and we, like Peter and the apostles and all the faithful since, have accepted the Son of God as our Savior, realizing that he bought us with his precious blood, and that we have peace with God through a realization that the divine sentence against us has been met, so that God can now justly accept us to himself, forgiving our sins—not imputing them to us, but accepting satisfaction through our Surety and his precious sacrifice. On the strength of this faith that he was the Son of God, that he died for our sins, we have also accepted him as the great King of Glory, whose Millennial Kingdom is surely to bless the world by establishing the reign of righteousness, by binding Satan and all the powers of evil, by causing the knowledge of the glory of God to fill the whole earth and by instituting a great reign of judgment, of justice, in the world, under which every unrighteous deed shall receive a just recompense of reward, and every good endeavor receive encouragement and blessing, and bring a corresponding uplift, mental, moral and physical, to the obedient.

By faith we now believe and accept the message that those who hear now in advance of the world have a special call to joint-heirship with their Redeemer in his glorious Kingdom, and shall share with him in his grand work of blessing and restoring the willing and obedient of mankind. What joy follows in the wake of this knowledge and its good confession only the elect can fully appreciate. And in proportion as these confess their faith that same faith grows, and the blessings and privileges connected with it grow, and gradually their joys become full to the overflowing of their earthly vessels in the present life and to their preparing the more for the glorious fullness of joy into which they will be ushered in their glorious resurrection change, when the Master himself shall say to them, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joys of thy Lord." —Matt. 25:21.

This same question confronts others who see with considerable clearness the mercy, the grace of God in Christ, and the glorious plan which centers in him, but who for the present are withholding a confession, who have not thus far taken their stand on the side of Christ, to confess him before men and to follow him in their daily life. To these we give a word of encouragement and a word of warning as well. They should

be encouraged with the evidences they have of the Lord's favor, in that they have been permitted to come to their present position of knowledge of Christ and the gracious plan of God centering in him. They should realize that while they have already appreciated much, still there is more to follow of grace and joy and peace and blessing and knowledge to those who go on, who take the important step of public confession, who enter into a covenant of sacrifice to be followers in the footsteps of Jesus. They cannot go on to belong to his disciples unless they confess him; they cannot hope to share in the glories that belong to the faithful who walk in the narrow way unless they take up their cross to follow.

But they should know that while the cross of the Lord is not a light one, nevertheless his yoke is easy and his burden is light because he yokes himself with us in our trials and difficulties of life. With him as our companion and burden-bearer the cross is light, the burden is easy and the joys and peace resulting to his faithful are indescribable, even as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the blessings by and by to be conferred on them. (1 Cor. 2:9.) The day of opportunity for accepting Christ under present conditions is rapidly speeding away. Soon the door of present privilege will close; and even though another door of gracious favor will open thereafter, its blessings and rewards cannot be considered with those which are now before us. Let us lay aside every weight and every besetting sin and enter the race and run patiently to its end, hoping for a share with our Redeemer in his glorious Kingdom work. R. 3789

What think ye of Christ? is the test
To try both your state and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of him.
Some take him a creature to be,
A man or an angel at most;
Sure these have not feelings like me,
Nor know themselves wretched and lost.
Some style him the pearl of great price,
And say he's the fountain of joys,
Yet feed upon folly and vice,
And cleave to the world and its toys.
If asked what of Jesus I think,
Though still my best thoughts are but poor,
I say, He's my meat and my drink,
My life, and my strength, and my store;
My Shepherd, my Husband, my Friend,
My Savior from sin and from thrall,
My hope from beginning to end,
My portion, my Lord and my all.

- R. 3789

Get Behind Me!

Mark 8:31-33

And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly.

Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

The noble Peter had scored a great success in faithful and prompt acknowledgment of the Master, and he received special favors and blessings and promises as a result. Perhaps this helped to make him somewhat heady and self-opinionated. Many admitted to the Lord's favor and privileged to confess him before men have stumbled over their own honor and exaltation. No wonder then the Apostle admonished, Be not many of you teachers, brethren, knowing that a man who is a teacher has severer trials, temptations. —Jas. 3:1.

Peter, in his love for the Master, and intoxicated somewhat by the honors bestowed upon him already, undertook to be the teacher— "not holding the Head" in proper reverence. Alas, how many treat the Lord's Word in the same manner today— ignoring his own statements and distorting his words in a manner which they are pleased to consider better than his, more honoring to him and to the Father. What a great mistake! Let us, dear fellow students, always recognize the headship of our Lord, and always remember that we are to listen to his Word and not to attempt to correct him or to substitute ideas of our own as being either better or as good. If we consider him worthy of the Father's honor and confidence, let us also consider him worthy to be our teacher, and from this standpoint let us take his every word seriously, carefully, implicitly.

Our Lord uttered this statement respecting his rejection and death openly— before the entire twelve apostles; but Peter, possibly elated by our Lord's words of commendation that the Father had revealed the matter to him, took our Lord aside privately to whisper to him that such sentiments should not be introduced nor expressed before the apostles—that it would be discouraging to them all, and that anyway there was certainly a mistake about the matter, for such things could never happen to him—must not happen; he must so order his speech and his conduct that these things would not happen. He must not violently antagonize the chief priests or elders, to thus lead them to conspire for his death.

The text says that "Peter took him," and this we may understand to signify that Peter took him apart from the others—it was a private interview and exhortation, and no doubt Peter intended to bring in various supporting arguments; for instance, that the disciples would be discouraged with such talk, etc. However, he only "began,"

and did not get to finish his argument, the Master being so full of the spirit of loyalty to the Father and his plan that he could not even endure a suggestion to the contrary, and must needs hasten to repudiate such a disloyal suggestion. His answer was a severe rebuke to Peter, yet doubtless was a blessing to him so long as he lived, and probably helped him afterward to be much more modest in the matter of opposing his plan to that of the Lord.

Allowance must be made for Peter, in that he was not only the eldest of the apostles, but quite a good deal older than our Lord, and that he was of a very ardent disposition, strong and impulsive. However, Jesus---who had a few moments before commended Peter for his appreciation of the fact of his Messiahship---now rebuked him, not privately, but in the presence of all the apostles. He probably knew that this would be the best method of correcting Peter's sentiments, which, should they spread amongst the apostles, would be very injurious to them all. Hence, our Lord's rebuke was pointed, sharp, and made known to all the apostles:

He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."
Matthew 16:23

The word here rendered "offence" would more properly be translated, as in the Revised Version, "a stumbling block," or a stone of stumbling. Thus we see that it was the same Peter whose noble confession had so refreshed the Lord and blessed the disciples and himself, and who on this account was designated a stone, indicative of strong character, that was now, by reason of the same strength of character, strong-mindedness, strong will, in danger of becoming, not a stone in the Lord's Temple, but a Stumbling Stone. And should some of the Lord's people, strong in character, become stumbling stones to us, we have here our Lord's illustration of our proper course---to turn from them, refusing to be stumbled, refusing to be lead away from the consecration which we have made.

Although Peter did not so intend the matter, his efforts were in the direction of turning the Lord aside from the fulfillment of his covenant. We are not to understand that Peter was turned into Satan, nor that Satan got possession of him, but rather in taking such a position he was becoming an opponent of the divine arrangement, as Satan was and still is.

There is a great lesson in this for us. Even though we be the Lord's disciples, and honored ones at that, we might very easily reach such a position as would be antagonistic to the divine arrangement and thus put ourselves unintentionally on the side of Satan, and become his ministers or servants. Our Lord emphasized this again on another occasion, saying, "His servants ye are to whom ye render service." It is necessary that we see to it that we are rendering our Lord service, and that our energies are not being spent in opposition to him and really in cooperation with the Adversary. R. 3790, R. 3340, R. 2658

Eyewitness of His Majesty

Matthew 16:28-17:9

"Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves, and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

Then Peter answered and said to Jesus,
"Lord, it is good for us to be here. If You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying,
"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said,
"Arise, and do not be afraid."

When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying,



Jesus Transfigured

"Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead."

Jesus prepared His disciples for the transfiguration vision, saying, "There be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death until they see God's Royal Majesty having come with power." Little did the disciples imagine that our Lord's statement that some of them should not taste of death until they had seen the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom, would be fulfilled within six days to Peter, James and John in the Mount of Transfiguration. Yet so it was, and evidently it produced a great and designed effect upon the witnesses.

Six days after Peter's confession that Jesus was the Messiah, and after our Lord had explained to the apostles that instead of immediate honor and glory in the world he would meet with contempt, persecution and death, and that the conditions of discipleship were willingness to suffer with him and joy in proclaiming his message, Jesus took the three leaders of the apostles most advanced in faith and zeal, Peter, James and John, up to a high mountain—presumed to be Mt. Hermon. Luke tells us that he went there to pray, and we may reasonably suppose that the three apostles joined with him in prayer.



The view from Mt. Hermon in Israel.

The occasion will be remembered. Jesus had foretold His death, quite contrary to the previous expectations of the Apostles, and now He sought to draw their minds gradually to a realization that His death would not mean a repudiation of the promise of the Kingdom and its glory but a fulfillment of their expectations on a higher plane. Jesus would formally offer Himself to Israel as King riding upon the ass five days before His crucifixion; He would be despised and rejected and crucified; but His kingly office and work would thereby only be confirmed. His authority to be King of the earth, His authority to release mankind from the power of sin and death, His authority to uplift humanity and to bring the earth in general to Paradise conditions, would all be founded upon His sacrificial death at Calvary.

All this was presented to the three chosen disciples six days later. Jesus took them to the mountain-top and was transfigured before them. Luke says that it was while they prayed that our Lord's features and garments were transfigured: Matthew says that his face shone like the sun. Two others appeared on the scene, Moses and Elias, of radiant appearance, though evidently less so than our Lord. In some manner they recognized these two men of the vision as Moses and Elijah. They heard these discourse with Jesus respecting His decease, "which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem," says St. Luke. How long the vision lasted we are not told.

The lesson deeply impressed the three Apostles who witnessed the vision, namely, Peter, James and John. St. Peter referred to it afterward in his Epistle:

For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory:

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.
2 Peter 1:16-18

The circumstances all corroborated the thought that it was a vision; but we are not left to circumstantial evidence, for we have our Lord's plain statement to this effect. As he came down the mountain side with the three apostles, he charged them straitly, saying, "Tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen from the dead." —Matt. 17:9. R. 3345

In this vision, as in all visions, the unreal appears real. Moses and Elias were not present on the mountain, personally, but were merely represented to the disciples in the vision. We know this not only from our Lord's statement, that it was a "vision," but also from his statement that no man had ascended up to heaven. (John 3:13; Acts 2:34.) We know also that Moses and Elijah could not have been there, since they were not resurrected from the dead; because our Lord Jesus himself was the "First-fruits of them that slept" —- "the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence." (1 Cor. 15:20; Col. 1:18.) Furthermore the Apostle to the Hebrews distinctly mentions Moses and the prophets (which would include Elijah) and their faithfulness in the past and their acceptance with God; but he points out that they had not yet received their reward, and that they would not receive it until after we (the Gospel Church) shall have received our reward as joint-heirs with Christ in his Kingdom. "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the [blessings of the] promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." —-Heb. 11:39,40.

Since, then, the appearance of Moses and Elias with our Lord was an appearance merely, we properly inquire, ***What was the significance or meaning of this vision?***

We reply, It was a tableau, illustrative of the glorious Kingdom of Christ, as our Lord had predicted, and as Peter understood it and expressed it. In this tableau, the three disciples formed no part. They were merely witnesses. Christ was the central figure; his features and garments, shining with miraculous lustre, represented in figure the glories which belong to the spirit nature, which our Lord received at his resurrection, "the express image of the Father's person." It is this same spirit glory that is represented in the visions of Revelation, where our Lord is represented with eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet bright as burning brass, etc. (Rev. 1:14,15; 2:18.) At his second advent our Lord will no longer be flesh because, as he testified, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." He is now, and ever will be, a glorious spirit being of the highest order—-the divine nature: and the transfiguration was intended to convey to the minds of his disciples a faint conception of the glory which excelleth.

What was the object of this vision?

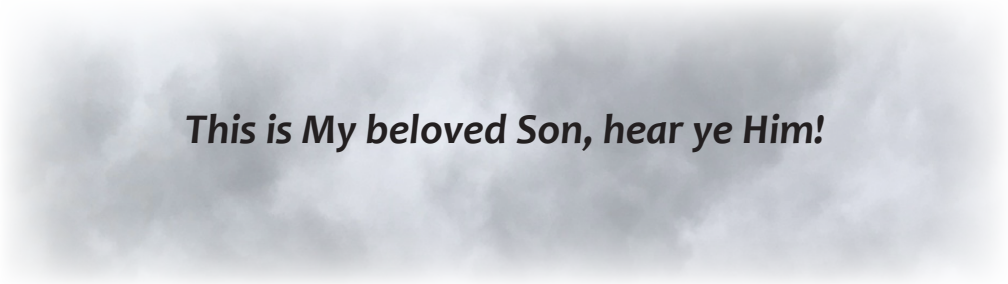
We answer that it was to establish the faith of the apostles. The Lord took the three who saw the vision from amongst the strongest of the number, and that it did make a deep impression is evidenced by Peter's reference already quoted. [2 Pet. 1:16-18 on previous page]. It was a heart lesson for them to learn—-that Jesus, the Messiah, the great King, who was to rule and to bless Israel and through Israel the world, and who was to establish them with him as associates and joint-heirs in the Kingdom, was about to die and apparently thus to frustrate all their hopes, and about to disprove his own claims of Messiahship. The time that elapsed between the breaking of the news to them and the vision, six days after, was just about enough to permit them to discuss matters and digest the meaning of our Lord's words. Then came the vision on the mount which corroborated our Lord's testimony in both respects—-the conversation of the vision corroborating his statement that he would suffer a martyr's death at Jerusalem; and the glorious vision itself, as well as the words from heaven, indicated

that our Lord was indeed what he claimed to be—that they were safe in accepting him as the Messiah, that they were not being deluded by "cunning fables." The vision evidently answered its divine purpose.

And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.
Luke 9:30-31

Of course, the disciples did not clearly comprehend the matter at the time, yet they realized a blessing and felt that it was "good to be there." Their meeting had started as a prayer-meeting: the three favorite disciples of the Lord accompanying him on this occasion, as on several other occasions—for instance, when he went in to awaken the daughter of Jairus from the sleep of death, and a little later than this in the Garden of Gethsemane, they were again his chosen and closest companions. We cannot suppose that the choice of these was an arbitrary one, but must suppose that there was something about these three men that made them specially companionable to the Lord. One thing about them that impresses every reader of the New Testament record is their faith in the Lord and their zeal for his cause.

Then came a voice from the overshadowing cloud, saying,



Peter proposed making some booths on the mountaintop for the Lord and his guests. Luke adds, "Not knowing what he said." He was bewildered, confused, but in harmony with his natural temperament wished to say something. The voice from heaven, however, seemed to say, Be still! hearken rather to the words of my beloved Son. Not a few need to learn the lesson of quietness—to hear and learn, be taught of God, before they have much to say. Peter evidently learned, as we may judge from his after conduct, to be slower to speak and swifter to hear. (James 1:19.) This is an important lesson to all who would be servants of the Lord: we must learn that of ourselves we know nothing, and can do nothing aright. The proper learning of this lesson means a lesson in humility and in patience, a lesson respecting our own nothingness, and that "our sufficiency is of God." Those who reach this condition become apt students in the school of Christ—not forgetful hearers, but doers of the Word: and such only are prepared to teach the truth to others. Those who are too forward and ready to teach, before they have received instruction from the Lord, are very apt not to know what they say, as was Peter's case; and if such be true-hearted and worthy of being used of the Lord as his servants, they are very apt to receive numerous reproofs from time to time.

The essence of the entire vision was to impress upon the minds of the apostles the fact that Jesus was the Messiah, that he was worthy of being heard, that he was the mouthpiece of God, that he that honored him honored the Father also. This voice was heard from the cloud, which represented the darkness and trouble which would be permitted to come upon the Lord's followers in the midst of all the trials of the dark days that were coming upon them in connection with Jesus' rejection by the Jews, his scourging, dishonor, crucifixion, death, burial. In all this they were to remember the voice of the Father, "This is my beloved Son," and were not to be discouraged nor allow their faith to grow faint. Similarly throughout this Gospel age the Lord has frequently permitted the same dark cloud to come over his faithful ones, that they might be the better prepared also to listen to his Word, his message, "This is my beloved Son," and this vision of the Holy Mount is an assurance respecting the glorious Kingdom which he will establish, which will be the end of darkness and trouble.

As the apostles were overpowered by the brilliancy of the vision and feared when they entered the cloud and heard the voice, so we in our weak and imperfect conditions sometimes find it difficult to grasp the glorious things which God hath set before us. The picture of the things unseen as yet is so wonderful as to amaze us. The fact that we have been invited to be heirs of God and associates with Jesus Christ our Lord in his Kingdom is too wonderful for us to grasp. We begin to fear lest we should fail in so great an undertaking. It is well for us to realize our own littleness and unworthiness, and to see that the whole matter is of the divine arrangement. It is well for us under the circumstances that the dark cloud of trouble and opposition is permitted to keep us very humble, that we may indeed fall on our faces in the dust. It is well that we should listen to the voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son: hear him."

The vision vanished as suddenly as it appeared, as John's visions vanished and changed from time to time. One account says that the apostles were heavy with sleep, and yet the vision seems not to have been a dream, but rather, as already stated, of the kind given to John on Patmos. The vision had a great lesson for the apostles, and as they followed Jesus down the mountain side to rejoin the waiting remainder of their number, they questioned one another respecting the rising from the dead, and what that signified. Our Lord had already mentioned to them that after he had been dead three days he should rise again, and now in the vision this had been repeated. It was evidently the divine intention to impress the matter of the resurrection upon their minds. Nevertheless, when the resurrection of our Lord did take place on the third day, we perceive that it was with great difficulty still that they comprehended the situation. How great would have been their difficulty had it not been for this previous instruction of our Lord and through the vision!

One lesson to us in this connection is that divine wisdom notes our weaknesses and needs and in advance makes full and thorough preparation for them. How comforting it is to us that the same Lord who then so carefully supervised the interests of the faithful ones, is the same yesterday,

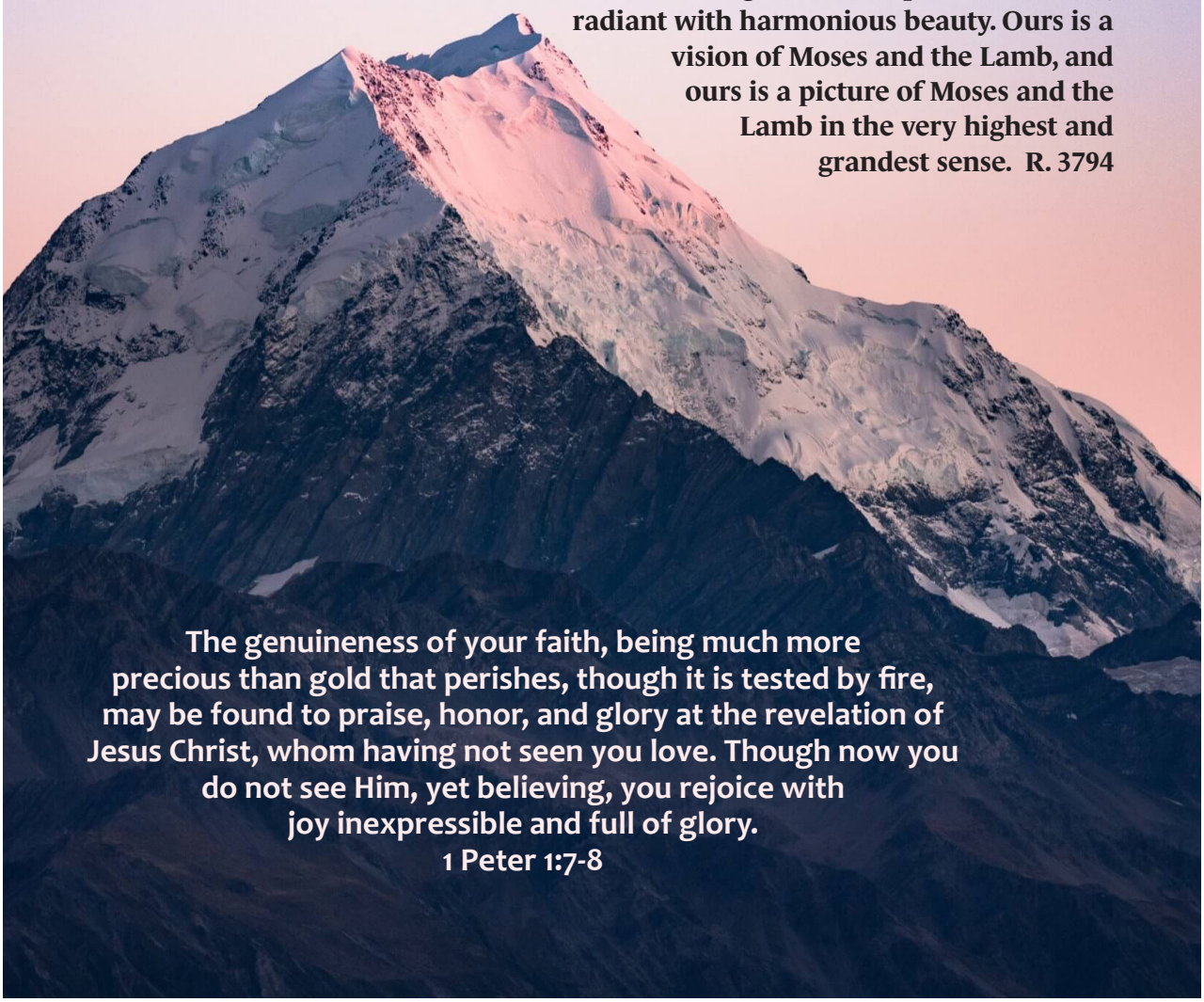
today

and forever,

and is equally caring for us now. R. 2288, R. 3345, R. 3794, R. 5121

Indeed we may safely conclude that those of the Lord's people who have seen with any kind of vision the glories of the Lord or have had a glimpse through the eyes of their understanding or otherwise of the glorious character and person of our Lord and God, have had the opportunity of realizing more than ever their own littleness and insufficiency. As it was the three most advanced ones of the Lord's followers who were granted that vision of the Kingdom, so since then it is the most advanced of the Lord's followers, the most humble, the most zealous, the most faithful, who are granted the clearest visions, the clearest perceptions of the glories of the Kingdom, and these are permitted to reveal to others of the elect little flock more and more of the grandeurs of the divine arrangement as each may be able to hear and to appreciate and to understand the same.

What wonderful privileges are ours at this day! Abiding in the Lord's love and favor, with loyalty of heart toward him, it is now our privilege of going up into the Mount of God and seeing wonderful things. Our visions are of a different kind. Before us are opened the glorious things of all the past---the divine revelations to Abraham and the prophets and through Jesus and the apostles ---all of these things now are opened before us, radiant with harmonious beauty. Ours is a vision of Moses and the Lamb, and ours is a picture of Moses and the Lamb in the very highest and grandest sense. R. 3794



The genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.
1 Peter 1:7-8

What Do You Think, Simon? Matthew 17:24-27

When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said,
"Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?"

He said, "Yes."

And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying,
"What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes: from their sons or from strangers?"

Peter said to Him,
"From strangers."

Jesus said to him,
"Then the sons are free. Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money. Take that and give it to them for Me and you."



Peter follows the Lord's instructions

Kings are not always personally worthy of honor; but honor is always due to the office, which is "ordained of God." (Rom. 13:1. See MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. 1, chapter 13, for the sense and purpose of their ordination.) Many of the magistrates ruling Judea in the days of the Lord and the Apostles were personally very unworthy of honor, yet the Lord and the apostles left us, not only their precepts, but also their example of submission to the authority thus represented: they were all respectful and law-abiding. ---Matt. 17:27; Acts 25:8,10,11.

Peter's counsel [in his first epistle] is to the same effect:

Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.
1 Peter 2:17

Neither Jesus nor the apostles interfered with earthly rulers in any way. On the contrary, they taught the Church to submit to these powers, even though they often suffered under their abuse of power. They taught the Church to obey the laws, and to respect those in authority because of their office, even if they were not personally worthy of esteem; to pay their appointed taxes, and, except where they conflicted with God's laws (Acts 4:19; 5:29), to offer no resistance to any established law. (Rom. 13:1-7; Matt. 22:21) The Lord Jesus and the apostles and the early Church were all law-abiding, though they were separate from, and took no share in, the governments of this world.

Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. Matthew 22:21

Though the powers that be, the governments of this world, were ordained or arranged for by God, that mankind might gain a needed experience under them, yet the Church, the consecrated ones who aspire to office in the coming Kingdom of God, should neither covet the honors and the emoluments of office in the kingdoms of this world, nor should they oppose these powers. They are fellow citizens and heirs of the heavenly kingdom (Eph. 2:19), and as such should claim only such rights and privileges under the kingdoms of this world as are accorded to **aliens.** Knowing that the purpose of God is to let the world fully test its own ability to govern itself, the true Church should not, while **in** it, be **of** the world.

The Apostle explains that in all matters that do not conflict with our own personal liberties and conscience we are to recognize the official position of those who are governing the world. Hence Christians of today are to judge themselves and to scrutinize the affairs of the Church and to purge out from their midst all leaven, but they are not to attempt to purge the world or to think of the world as being under their judgment now.

In viewing this whole subject we are forcibly reminded of the Apostle's counsel to the entire Church in their individual relationship to the powers that be, which are ordained of God–– "Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. Owe no man anything, but to love one another." ––Rom. 13:7,8. R. 1555, A266, R. 3778

The tribute money was the Temple tax (about thirty-five cents), which every male Israelite was expected to pay annually. The priestly class were exempted. So, too, in Gentile nations the Royal families were free from taxation. Jesus, therefore, as the Son of God---Peter had just confessed him as such (16:16)---should be free from this tax for the Temple of his Father's House. But a refusal might have the appearance of evil, of a lack of zeal for God, and so cause the people to stumble. So, as the Temple was not yet cast off and forsaken by God, and no principle of righteousness was violated, Jesus paid the tribute, but at the same time, to prove to his disciples that it was as a concession and not a debt, he obtained the coin in an authoritative way. HGL632:10



How Often, Lord?

Matthew 18:21-22

**Then Peter came to Him and said,
"Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?
Up to seven times?"**

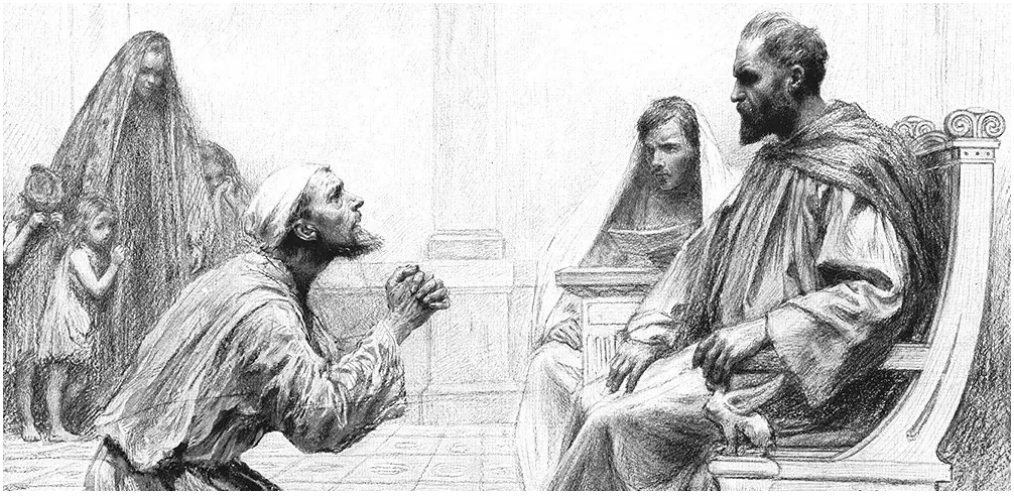
**Jesus said to him,
"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."**

St. Peter's query, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him; until seven times?" is a query that comes to many. It is a question that at some time and in some manner or form is quite sure to come to all the followers of Christ. Imperfect ourselves and surrounded by others who are imperfect, we continually have need to exercise mercy, benevolence, forgiveness. There is something in the human mind which naturally appreciates justice and takes special note of injustice done toward us. It is also remarkable how many people take a delight in meting out justice to an offender against the law. It is this spirit which has been noted in mobs. Men and women and children work themselves into a very frenzy, as advocates of justice, in expressions against a guilty wretch who escapes the clutches of the law and a just penalty, and insist upon taking vengeance into their own hands. It would appear that many of those who participate in mobs have at times been guilty of nearly or quite as great crimes as those which they reprehend in another and would punish. It would appear that there is a craving in the fallen flesh to do violence to another, or to see violence done, if only there could be an excuse for it on the score of justice. Alas, poor creatures, how wrong such a condition of heart, how reprehensible in the sight of God! And yet those who thus wrongfully give loose rein to their passions, quiet their own consciences, at least, by concluding that they are viewing the matter like God, loving justice and hating iniquity.

Notice that Peter's query is, If my brother trespass against me how often shall I forgive him? Seven times? Peter no doubt had in mind the thought that seven was the symbol of perfection, and that this might mark the reasonable limit of mercy and forgiveness. He did not, of course, consider that if that were a divine law it would mean that he himself might be forgiven of the Lord not more than seven times for imperfections, shortcomings, etc. Our Lord's answer is broad and sweeping— "I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven." Some are disposed to translate this until seventy and seven times, but evidently the Lord's intention was to imply that forgiveness should be granted as often as it is sought with any manifestation whatever of sincerity.

This is not merely advice from the Master to his followers—it is a command. It is not optional with us how we shall do toward our brother, for the great Teacher has assured us that if we have not the forgiving spirit we cannot be his disciples. His words are, "If ye do not from the heart forgive men their trespasses neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses."

All, then, who realize their need of divine mercy and forgiveness and who receive the great Teacher's instruction on this point will be careful to cultivate in their hearts in every sense a forgiving spirit, a loving, generous disposition. And by this all men may know the disciples of the Lord of mercy. Then our Lord gave a parable, to illustrate this matter, in respect to the Kingdom of Heaven class—the Church in the present embryotic condition. A certain king had a reckoning with his servants, and squared up all accounts. Amongst the others, one owed him ten thousand talents. His master commanded him to be sold, and his wife and all that he had, until the payment should be made. But the servant fell down at his master's feet and besought him to have compassion on him and he would pay the debt. And the master had compassion on him and discontinued further prosecution on account of the debt.



Parable of The Unforgiving Servant

The servant thus released went out and began to look up some of those who were indebted to him, and found a fellow-servant who owed him a hundred pence, a very insignificant sum in comparison to the one which he had owed the master. He took his fellow-servant by the throat, saying, "Pay me the hundred pence thou owest." His fellow-servant fell at his feet and besought mercy, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." But he would not delay, and cast him into prison till the debt should be paid. The matter finally reached the ears of the master, who called him and said, "Thou wicked servant! I released thee from the penalty of thy debt because thou didst entreat me! thou shouldst also have had mercy upon thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity upon thee." And he was angry, and delivered him to punishment till he should pay all that was due.

What is the lesson?

It is that we should have compassion upon one another, even as we desire that God for Christ's sake should have compassion upon us. The lesson is well expressed in our text. We should be kind one to another, tender-hearted—even as God also in Christ forgave us—and continues to forgive our trespasses day by day. The trespasses of others against us are trifling indeed in comparison to our obligations to the Lord. We should therefore be very willing to forgive all who ask us— "until seventy times seven." In thus exercising mercy we will be copying the Divine character. The influence upon our hearts and lives will be ennobling. Our Lord Jesus is the express image of the Father's person, and we, in copying the qualities of generosity and Love, become more Christlike, and therefore more Godlike. R. 4650, R. 3801, R. 5134

That Servant

Luke 12:35-44

"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning, and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

Then Peter said to Him,
"Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?"

And the Lord said,
"Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has."

The Lord purposely left His followers without definite information respecting the time for the establishment of His Kingdom. He had illustrated the interim of time between His going and returning in the Parable of the Talents. He as the Master had left His servants in charge of His goods while He went to a far country, even Heaven itself, to be invested with the Kingdom authority; and at an appropriate time He would return to receive His servants, and according to their faithfulness would make them sharers with Him in His Kingdom, and then would begin His rule over His subjects, for their blessing and uplift out of sin and death conditions—for their deliverance from the reign of Sin and Death.

If in a great house, the master were about to be married and to bring home his bride, the servants would on that particular night be especially active, wakeful, attentive, that they might receive their lord with proper attention. They would not know exactly the time of their master's coming; but they would be continually on the alert that they might hear his knock and open instantly. So Jesus declared all of His followers should be on the alert for His Second Coming. It was not that He would bring His Bride with Him, rather He comes that He may receive His Bride here. Indeed, the faithful servants are then to be made the Bride, according to the other picture.

The thought is that Jesus' followers should take their ideals of alertness from the extremest experience of earthly service. Jesus intimated that His followers might be looking for Him sooner than He would come, saying that if He shall come in the second watch or in the third watch or whenever, blessed are those servants if he finds them watching for Him, alert, ready to receive Him. He declared that He will grant such servants a special honor. He will gird Himself, make Himself their servant, and cause them to sit down to a sumptuous feast which He will provide.

It is our Lord's Parousia that is described in this parable—His earliest manifestations of His Second Advent. The world will see Him not, and know not of His presence, and His Church will know of His presence only by His "knock" —by the intimations given in the Scriptures—the fulfillment of prophecy. It will then be for the watchful ones to recognize this fulfillment, and by faith to open their hearts and minds promptly to acknowledge the Master's presence and all that Presence implies of the nearness of His Kingdom and of the proving of all who will be found faithful, worthy to share in that Kingdom as members of His Bride.

For such as receive Him He will make a feast. Out of the Divine Word He will bring things new and old, for their refreshment and comfort. The Bible will become to them a new Book; they will feast upon the riches of God's grace, and the dark things will become clear, the hidden mysteries shall be revealed. The Master Himself will be the Servant, the Revealer, the Setter-forth of these viands of Truth.

"But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken into." The great Teacher here intimates that Satan, the Prince of this world, is the master of the present order of things on earth; and that at His Second Coming He will bind this strong man, or master of the present order, and overturn present institutions and establish instead the long-promised Reign of Righteousness. It will be this thorough transition from the Reign of Sin and Death to the Reign of Righteousness and Life, which will cause the great Time of Trouble mentioned everywhere throughout the Bible as marking the closing of this Gospel Age— "a Time of Trouble such as never was since there was a nation." —Daniel 12:1; Mark 13:8; Matthew 24:21.

Here and elsewhere Jesus speaks of His Second Coming as thief-like. The thought is that He will be present for a time, unobserved by the world, known only to the Bride class, the salt of the earth, whom He will remove—changing them from earthly nature to Heavenly. Verse 40 confirms this thought, and instructs all the Lord's faithful that they should be ready for His presence, to render up at any hour their accounts and experience the change.

St. Peter was perplexed. Was this parable especially for the Apostles, that they should watch, etc., or was it for all the people? he inquired. But the Lord did not answer him directly. He merely assured St. Peter that at the appropriate time the Lord would appoint a steward over His household, to give them their portion of food in due season. This is not very different from what has been the Lord's usual method of dealing with His family. While a measure of the Spirit is given to each for his profit; and while the



Christ at Heart's Door by Warner Sallman, c. 1940-1952

**Behold,
I stand at the
door and knock.
If anyone hears
My voice and
opens the door,
I will come
in to him and
dine with him,
and he with Me.**

Revelation 3:20

Holy Spirit thus given is to guide the recipient into a knowledge of the things of God, nevertheless the Lord has been pleased to use special instrumentalities at various times.

For instance, St. Peter apparently for a time was a leader amongst the Apostles, in opening the Pentecostal door, and later in opening the door to the Gentiles —-preaching to Cornelius, the first Gentile convert. Later on, the Lord seems to have specially chosen St. Paul to be His particular messenger to the Gentiles; as we read, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name unto the Gentiles." (Acts 9:15.) Similarly Enoch, Abraham, Moses, the Prophets, and others during this Gospel Age, have seemed to be especially used of the Lord to draw the attention of His people to His Word. In the case of the Apostles, there was of course a plenary or special inspiration, which does not appertain to others of this Age since.

While the Lord has thus appointed special servants in handing to His household meat in due season at various times, it was required of each one who would partake that he should prove, test, determine whether or not the teaching was of God. He was to prove all things by the written Word of God, which the Apostle Paul declared is sufficient that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished. Any servant not found faithful, it is intimated, would be supplanted by another.

The servant at the end of the Age, at the time of the Master's coming, if found faithful, would be especially blessed, and be given a general charge respecting the spiritual food to the Lord's family, the "meat in due season." But if he should prove unfaithful and fail to recognize the Master's presence, and manifest an unkind spirit toward the household, ministering to his own earthly wants rather than to the spiritual needs of the family of God, he would be removed in that day—-cut asunder, separated, allowed to go into outer darkness with the world in general, in utter ignorance of the times and seasons, etc., of his Lord. The assumption is that the displacement of the one servant would mean the recognition of another to supply the Household of Faith.

"But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required. And to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."
Luke 12:45-48

The heart of this lesson is found in verse 37, which refers to all of the Lord's servants who will be living at the time of His Second Coming—who in the earliest stages of His Second Coming, in the time of His Parousia, His presence, will be faithfully watching, on the alert to serve every interest of the Lord's cause, seeking His will, doing His will, searching the Scriptures, obeying the Scriptures, to the best of their ability. These will be informed to a certain degree respecting the time in which they will be living, as the Apostle points out, saying: "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." (1 Thes. 5:4)

The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. . . .
2 Peter 3:10

The secrecy observed respecting the time and the manner of the Second Coming of Jesus will prove to be a strong test. However, there will be a great blessing on those servants whom the Lord at that time shall find watching—not watching the sky, as though they would see Jesus, when He is now a spirit being, invisible to humanity, but watching the Bible testimonies, watching the trend of the times, watching their own hearts, watching also the interests of the Church of God, seeking to build one another up in the most holy faith, laying aside every weight and every besetting sin and helping the Bride to make herself ready. —Revelation 21:9; 19:7. R. 5399

All Things Are Possible

Mark 10:23-30

Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples,
"How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!"

And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them,
"Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves,
"Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said,

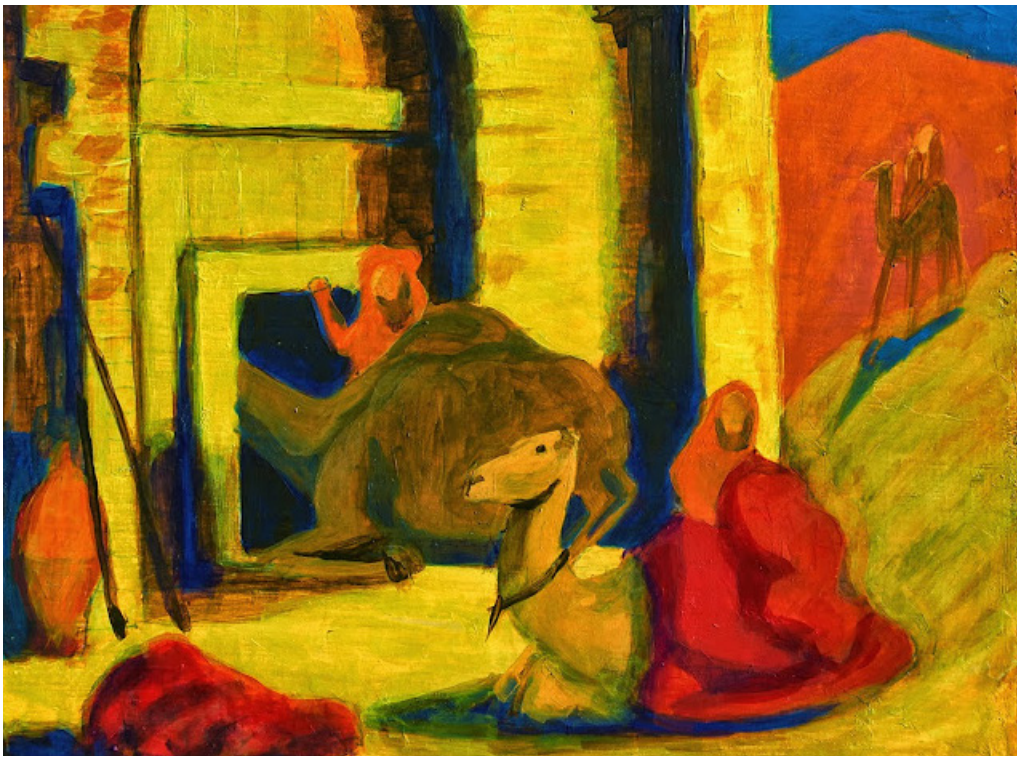
"With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible."

Then Peter began to say to Him,
"See, we have left all and followed You."

So Jesus answered and said,
"Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time ----houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions----and in the age to come, eternal life."

When the young man had gone away sorrowful---declining to have the eternal life which Jesus was offering on the only terms now attaching to the offer---Jesus looked around upon his disciples and followers and noted afresh that they were for the most part ignorant, unlearned men and the poor of this world, and he said to them, "How hardly [with what difficulty] shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." We read that the disciples were amazed at this statement. As they looked about them they well knew that the most prominent in religious circles were the rich, either in mental, social or physical riches. If the great, the learned, the Doctors of the Law, the prominent Pharisees, the rulers in the synagogues, the members of the Sanhedrin, etc., who constituted the wealthiest portion of the nation---if these would not get into the Kingdom of God, which the whole people had been waiting for for centuries---if these, whom they supposed to be the ones most ready for that Kingdom, and who claimed to be the only ones ready, and that all others were unfit because unholy, what must they think of the Kingdom---who would be in it anyway?

Noting their astonishment Jesus made the matter still more emphatic, saying, "Children [simple, unsophisticated ones], how difficult it is for them who trust in



Camel Entering Needle's Eye by Thomans Bertram Poole

riches to enter the Kingdom of God!" Here our Lord defines the difficulty: it was not merely the fact that a man had been born wealthy or that by some peculiar means he had acquired great wealth—not these conditions would hinder him from getting into the Kingdom; but it would be the fact that he would love these riches and trusted in them that would hinder his faith in God and his love for God and his dependence upon God and his learning the lessons of faith which the poorer would have many more opportunities for learning.

The Needle's Eye referred to by Jesus was the name given to a small gate or opening in a large gate in the city wall. The gates of Jerusalem were closed at night for protection against robbers, and watchmen were on duty. The gates were not allowed to be opened until morning, lest a considerable number of armed men might enter and pillage the city. An arrangement was made, however, for travelers who failed to reach the gate before it was closed. The smaller gate, the Needle's Eye, was just large enough to permit a camel to go through after it had been unburdened—its load removed. Thus understood, Jesus taught that as a camel could go through the Needle's Eye, or smaller gate, only by having its load removed, so a rich man could enter the Kingdom of God only by renouncing his burdens, giving up all to the Lord.

All this placing of the rich, the favored class, apparently at a disadvantage as compared with the poor, or disfavored class, caused amazement to Jesus' disciples. They inquired, "Who, then, can be saved?" The rich seemingly had all the opportunities of time, influence and money to enable them to give more and better service to the Lord than could others; and if they would have such difficulty in getting into the Kingdom, how would it be with others, less favored apparently? Jesus answered that "all things are

possible with God." That is to say, if the rich man's heart be pleasing to the Lord—if he be honest-hearted and humble, and his riches alone stand in the way—the Lord would know how to show him His will in respect to their use; or if this did not avail, the Lord would know how to strip him of his wealth, even as the master of the camel would unload his beast to permit him to pass through the Needle's Eye.

Many have had this very experience. They have been rich in honors of men, in social standing or in a financial sense; and God, in love and mercy, has stripped them of all these, giving them the necessary lessons, fitting and preparing them for a share in the Kingdom. With God this is possible. He knows how to overrule all things for good to those who love Him with all their heart, mind, soul and strength.

A new idea respecting the exclusiveness of the Kingdom offer was reaching the apostles, and Peter, the spokesman for them, called attention to the fact that although they were not wealthy they had forsaken all that they did possess to become the Lord's followers, and therefore he desired an assurance that he and his associates would be in the Kingdom. He seemed to get the thought that joint-heirship with the Master in the Kingdom would mean a full surrender to God—a leaving of all and a yielding up of all—in order to a close approach to God and full acceptance by Him. St. Peter said:

Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee.

Jesus did not fully endorse St. Peter's statement. He knew about Judas, who had not nearly left all. He knew about St. Peter himself—that some self-will still remained, and that self-preservation would lead him to deny his Master. But the answer that Jesus gave fully covered the question, not only for the Apostles, but for all who have become followers of Jesus from that day until now. The persecutions they are sure to get; but everything sacrificed for the Lord's cause is compensated a hundredfold in the present life. How gracious the Divine arrangements; and then beyond, the everlasting life and, if faithful, a share with the Master in the Kingdom!

Let us guard against a mistaken view of our Lord's words respecting father, mother, houses, lands, etc. Our Lord certainly did not mean that we should sacrifice others in order to be his disciples. It is ourselves that we are to deny, ourselves that we are to sacrifice. Hence in making our consecration and in our endeavor to carry it out we are to remember this, and to deal justly and lovingly with those who are dependent upon us and for whom we are responsible by ties of nature. For instance, the selling of houses and lands, the forsaking of these, would not mean that the Lord would have us deprive our families of necessary comforts and temporal provisions. Other Scriptures show this distinctly, that he that provides not for his own—for those for whom he is the responsible caretaker, —is worse than an unbeliever.

This does not mean, however, that we should yield to the whims and fancies of friends or neighbors or parents or children in respect to our course as the Lord's followers. We are not men pleasers—and the only one who has the right to command us and the only one we have a right to obey is the Lord Jesus. R. 3844 and R. 5466

All the apostles were bold faithful advocates of the truth, and examples of its power to sanctify them wholly, as they gradually grew in grace submitting themselves to its transforming influence. They were men of similar and varied dispositions like ourselves. Mark those who so run and do likewise. Our Lord marked these, and kept a careful record of their course judging them by their motives and endeavors; and he shows us that their course thus judged, all their imperfections being covered by the imputed righteousness of their Leader, was acceptable to him. They left *all* and followed Christ. Their all was not so very much, not any more in many cases than we have to leave, but it was their *all,* and so was acceptable. Peter had left his fishing business, and his friends, to travel with the Master and learn and teach the truth; he had thus given up his own will and present interests to do the will of God. And when he said to the Lord "Lo we have left all and have followed thee," the Lord did not say his little all was not worth mentioning, but he recognized it and encouraged Peter to continue to sacrifice *all,* with the assurance that in due time he would be rewarded. (Mark 10:28-30.) And so shall we all be, if we faint not; for faithful is he that hath called us, who also will exalt us in due time. R. 1041



THROUGH THE NEEDLE'S EYE

Tall was my camel and laden high,
And small the gate as a needle's eye.
The city within was very fair,
And I and my camel would enter there.
'You must lower your load,' the porter cried,
'You must throw away that bundle of pride.'
This I did, but the load was great,
Far too wide for the narrow gate.
'Now,' said the porter, 'to make it less,
Discard that hamper of selfishness.'
I obeyed, though with much ado,
Yet still nor camel nor I got through.
'Ah,' said the porter, 'your load must hold
Some little package of trust-in-gold.'
The merest handful was all I had,
Yet 'Throw it away,' the porter bade.
Then lo, a marvel! the camel tall
Shrank to the size of the portal small,
And all my riches, a vast estate,
Easily passed through the narrow gate!

--R. 4658

The Withered Tree

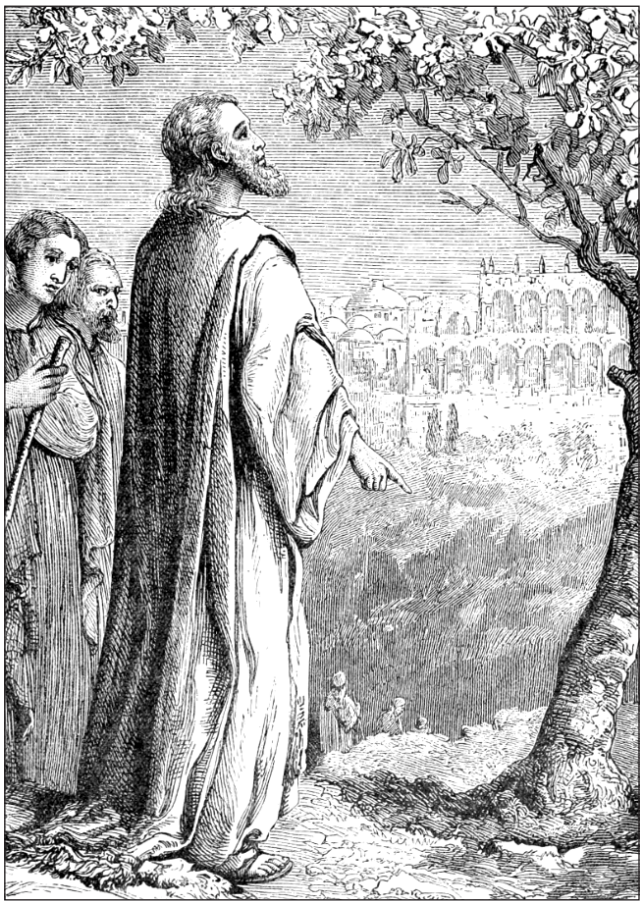
Mark 11:13-14;20-22

And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again."

And His disciples heard it. Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away."

So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God."



The Withered Fig Tree by Frank Zimmerman

As Jesus and His Apostles passed along the road from Bethany to Jerusalem preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, they had seen, en route, a fig tree. Our Lord, being hungry, went to the tree, seeking fruit thereon; for the time of figs was not yet past. But He found that the tree was barren. Then He pronounced a curse, a blight, upon the tree. The next day as they passed by, Jesus' disciples noticed that the fig tree had withered from the roots. Then Peter said, "Master, behold, the fig tree which Thou cursedst is withered away!" Jesus answered, "Have faith in God." (Mark 11:13,14,20-22.) Then He called their attention to the fact that it was not merely Himself who had blighted the tree, but that the Heavenly Father was to be recognized as behind Him in this. He ascribed always the honor to the Father. He was merely the Finger of God. "The works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me." "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." —John 5:36; 14:10.

Some of the people of that time, as now, had malignant power; and Jesus' act might have been attributed to that source. So He would direct the minds of His disciples to the things that He did as being always of God—thus differentiating His power from that of Satan. Some might wonder that God would take notice of a tree because it was not bearing fruit. But Jesus was not an ordinary person. His course was not an example for us to go along the street and, seeing an unfruitful tree, say, "Cursed be this tree; it shall not bear any more fruit forever!" Should we adopt this course, we might be finding fault with trees and with everything else. But our Lord was especially sent of God. He was accustomed to do good as He went about. He healed the people and taught them, giving them forceful object lessons.

It was necessary that the disciples of Jesus be thoroughly convinced that He was sent of God before they could have developed in them the needful faith. They must continue this faith, consecrating their hearts and lives to God, before they would be ready for the Pentecostal blessing. Hence many of our Lord's works were of an outward, visible kind, intended for the enlightenment of His followers, for the establishment of His Messiahship, and for the manifestation of His future work for the world.

Therefore, we think we are taking the proper view of matters when we suppose that even the little things, every little act of the Lord Jesus, was in some degree prophetic, significant of the great things to come.

This lesson considers the events of the last day of our Lord's public ministry. He rested at Bethany over the Sabbath and participated in a feast to his honor that (Jewish) Sabbath eve. The next day, the first day of the week—Sunday—he rode on the ass, making a triumphal entry into the city of the great King. Mark informs us that he visited the Temple on that occasion, looking about on the condition of things, and that it was the next day, Monday, that he drove out the money-changers, etc. Now we come to the day following, **Tuesday,** the last day of his public teaching. Note the record thus:

John 12:1 – informs us that the Feast at Bethany was "six days before the Passover" –– Sabbath.
Mark 11:1 – records the events of the next day, Sunday.
Mark 11:2-19 – relates the events of Monday.
Mark 14:1 – shows that Wednesday and Thursday intervened before the Passover Feast began.

It is our understanding that the fig tree was a type or picture of the Jewish nation, to whom Jesus came when it was proper to expect fruitage. But coming to the Jews, he did not find the nation bearing fruit. The great ones of the nation were cast off; and only the publicans and sinners were ready to accept his message—the very ones the others would not recognize at all.

It is remembered that the nation had a blight upon it. At the end of his ministry, Jesus, riding to the brow of the hill overlooking Jerusalem, said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,

which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." (Luke 13:34,35.) A very short time afterwards it began to lose its power; and the Jewish nation lost its identity completely as a nation in the year 70—37 years after.

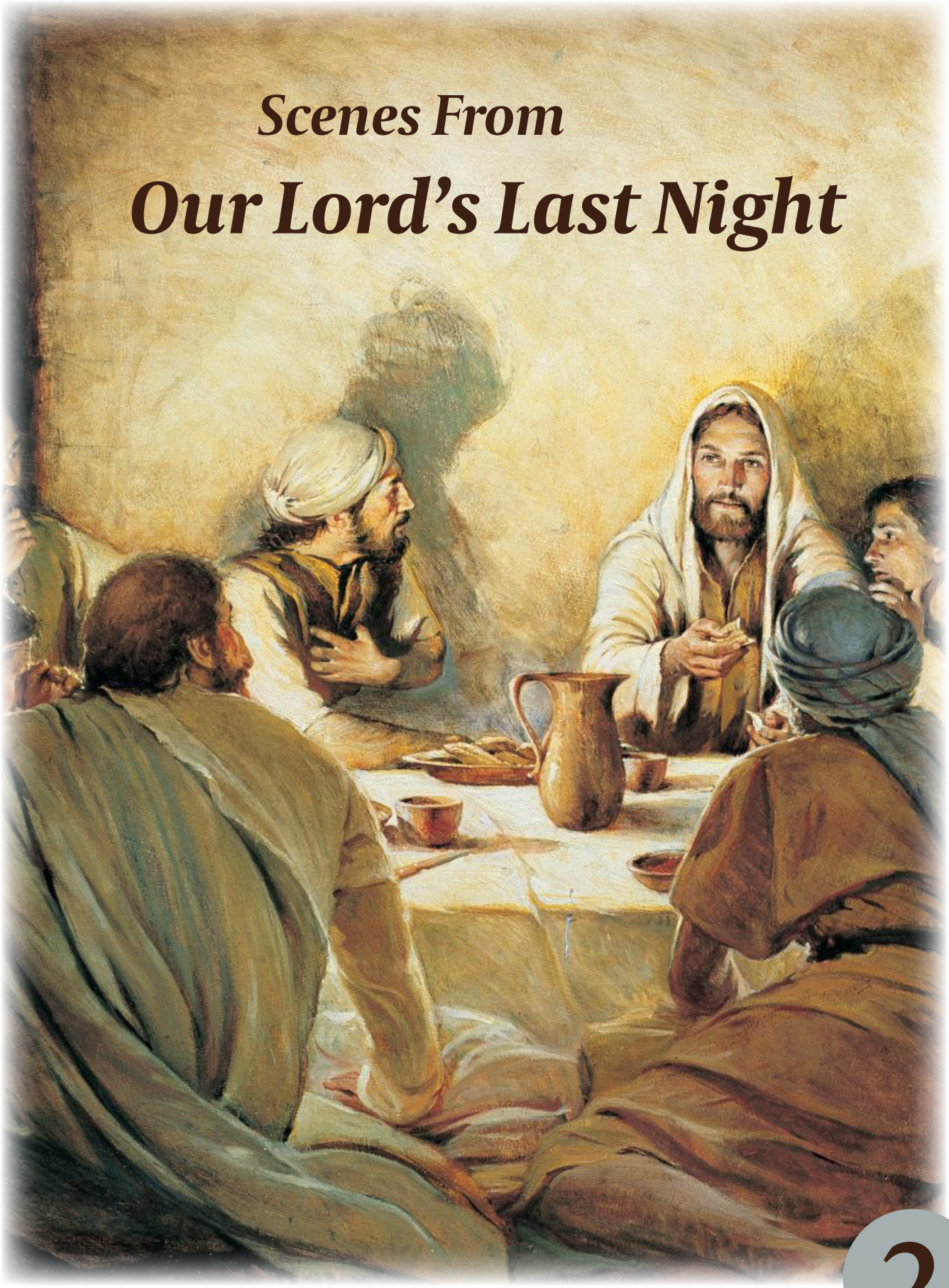
While the Jewish nation has thus been in hades, in the tomb, so to speak, it is as a nation that they are referred to thus. Of course, they go into the tomb as individuals, as every one else; but as a nation also they have gone into the tomb. But according to the Scriptures there will be a resurrection of the Jewish nation, and a picture of that raising up is given where it says, "the bones came together, bone to his bone," etc. (Ezek. 37:7.) Those bones represent the whole house of Israel, which is referred to as saying, "Our hope is dead" (Vs. 11); our ambitions are all gone or are asleep!

"I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD.
Ezekiel 37:14

So God is telling them that all the Kingdom hopes of that nation are to be revived. As Jesus said to his disciples in one of his discourses—When ye see the fig tree beginning to put forth its tender leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. We see the fig tree putting forth its leaves today (see Matt. 24:32; Mark 13:28); we see the Jews looking back to Jerusalem, and we thus see the fig tree putting forth its leaves, or giving signs of life, looking forward to the re-establishment of the Jewish nation. God says there will be such a Jewish nation again.* R. 5920, R. 3852, R. 4788

*Pastor Russell wrote this article (R. 4788) in 1911, and his death came in 1916. He never saw the fulfillment of this prophecy while on this side of the veil. His interpretation of these prophecies, though, (viz., Eze. 37 and Israel as represented by the fig tree in Matt. 24 and here in Mark 11), we know to be correct, as Israel was established as a nation in 1948. Jesus cast off the Jewish nation when they rejected him as their Messiah (Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35), and after a period of disfavor, it is now the due time for them to return to favor. The nation was revived in 1948 and given life.

Scenes From
Our Lord's Last Night



In Remembrance of Me by Walter Rane

Preparing the Passover

Luke 22:7-13

Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying,
"Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat."

So they said to Him,
"Where do You want us to prepare?"

And He said to them,
"Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him into the house which he enters. Then you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?" '

Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room. There make ready." So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover.

Jesus and the apostles came to Bethany, near Jerusalem, that they might eat the Passover Supper in the holy city, and that our Lord might suffer at the hands of his enemies, as he had foretold his disciples—that thus he might accomplish an atonement for the sins of the people. His arrival was just a week before his crucifixion. The following day at the supper Mary anointed him. On the next day he rode on the ass into Jerusalem, was not received, wept over the city, and said, "Your house is left unto you desolate." On the following day he visited the temple, driving out the money changers with the scourge of cords. The next day he gave his last public teaching in the temple, declaring himself to be the light of the world. Every night he seems to have returned to Bethany to the house of Lazarus and Martha and Mary, which was also the home of himself and the apostles whenever they were in that vicinity. The next day, Wednesday, the Lord remained in Bethany in retirement, and on Thursday sent two of his disciples to make ready the Passover, which was eaten by himself and the twelve that night— "the same night in which he was betrayed."

The feast of Passover lasted a week, and was one of the most important celebrated under the Jewish arrangement. During that week, leaven, as a type of sin, was carefully put away from all the food and destroyed in every house, in intimation of the holiness and purity, the unleavenness, of the Lord's people—spiritual Israel—typically represented by natural Israel. The whole week was a festival of rejoicing because of God's deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. The feast-week began on the 15th day of the first month, Jewish reckoning, but it was preceded on the 14th by the killing of the lamb, and the sprinkling of its blood upon the doorposts of the houses, as a memorial of what took place in Egypt on the night in which the Lord spared the first-born of Israel under the blood and slew the first-

born of the Egyptians, and thus made the latter willing to let his people go free. It was for the eating of this memorial lamb on the night previous to the beginning of the Passover feast-week that our Lord sent his disciples to make ready, as explained in our lesson.



The Man Bearing a Pitcher of Water by F. Zimmerman

Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?" ' Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared. There make ready for us."
Mark 14:14-15

Luke tells us that it was Peter and John who were sent on this mission, and Mark tells us that they were to know the man at whose house the feast would be held by his carrying a pitcher of water. It has been surmised by some that the house was that of Mark's mother, Mary, and that the upper room thus used was the same one in which the apostles subsequently met and where the pentecostal blessing was poured out upon them. We do know that it was at the house of this Mary that many gathered to pray for the release of Peter from prison. It was a "large upper room" and was already prepared with a suitable dining couch of proper dimensions. It has been surmised that Jesus took this indirect way of indicating the place that Judas might not be informed until the time for the gathering, so that there might be no interruption of the feast and our Lord's subsequent discourses, recorded in John 14:17, on the part of those who were seeking his apprehension. Peter and John made ready the Passover in the sense of furnishing and preparing the lamb, the unleavened bread, bitter herbs and the fruit of the vine, and in the evening at the appropriate time the entire company gathered for the celebration.

During the passover week hospitality was recognized as a duty in Jerusalem: hence the readiness with which the Lord's request for a room was granted. Probably the man was a believer, as [Mark 14:14] would seem to indicate; or there may have been some previous arrangement with him, as verse 15 seems to show.

The strife to be greatest, mentioned only by Luke (22:24), probably began when they were taking their places at the table, each desiring to be nearest to the Lord and so manifesting somewhat of a selfish spirit. This was made the occasion of a very touching illustration of humility on the Lord's part, and the enforcement of the truth upon the minds of the disciples that without this very necessary qualification they could not enter the Kingdom of heaven. R. 3363 and R. 1800

A Lesson in Humility

John 13:3-17

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter.

And Peter said to Him,
"Lord, are You washing my feet?"

Jesus answered and said to him,
"What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

Peter said to Him,
"You shall never wash my feet!"

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

Simon Peter said to Him,
"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

Jesus said to him,
"He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean, and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew who would betray Him.

Therefore He said,
"You are not all clean." So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again,

He said to them,
"Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."



Jesus Washes The Apostle's Feet

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.
John 13:1

John does not give a particular account of the Passover supper, but seems merely to bring in certain valuable features and lessons connected therewith, omitted by the other Evangelists. His declaration is that our Lord knew beforehand that he had reached the end of his earthly career, and was specially solicitous of improving the closing hours with his particular, chosen friends and companions, by inculcating some good lessons. "He loved them to the end" —completely, fully: his own sharp trials, present and approaching, did not distract him, nor absorb his attention. He was, as heretofore, still thinking of and endeavoring to bless others.

From Luke's account it would appear that on this occasion there was a strife amongst the apostles, a contention, respecting which of them should be esteemed greatest. (Luke 22:24-31.) This strife may not have been solely one of selfishness, in the evil sense of the word, but partially prompted by love for the Master—it may have been in respect to their several positions at the table, the coveted position possibly being closeness to our Lord's person. We remember how James and John had made request that they might be on the right and on the left of our Lord in the Kingdom, and we remember that in connection with this narrative it is declared that John was next to our Lord, and leaned upon his bosom.

Peter, while considering the question of superiority with some measure of self-complacency, little knew how great a trial would in a few hours put the metal of

his character to the test. Nor did the other disciples comprehend the critical hour to which they had come. But the Lord fully realized it, and endeavored to prepare them for it.

Quite possibly this dispute respecting greatness arose in part from the fact that they were not in this instance treated as guests, but merely had the upper room put at their disposal; having no host, no provision was thereby made for the usual washing of the feet, and it was neglected. The matter of feet-washing in eastern countries, when sandals were worn, was not merely a compliment, but a necessity, the heat of the climate, the openness of the sandals, and the dust of the roads, making it almost indispensable to comfort that the feet be bathed on arriving at the house after a journey. Apparently this question of who of the twelve was greatest, and of which should perform the menial service of feet-washing for the others, had developed the fact that none of them were anxious to take the servant's position.

Our Lord apparently let the matter go to the full limit to see whether or not any of them would improve the opportunity and make himself servant of all: he waited until the supper was being served (not ended, as in our common version;) then arising from the table he laid aside his outer garment or mantle and took a towel and girded himself—that is to say, tightened the girdle worn around the waist, which would hold up the flowing under-garments and keep them out of the way of his activity. We can well imagine the consternation of the apostles as they watched this procedure, and then saw the Lord go from the feet of one and another as they protruded from the couches on which they reclined (as illustrated in a previous lesson). The method of washing feet was different from ours: the basin was merely a receptacle for holding the soiled water, the water being poured from the pitcher in a small stream while the foot was being washed, rubbed, rinsed.

Apparently the apostles were so astonished at our Lord's procedure, and so felt the condemnation which his course implied, that they knew not what to say, and so silence reigned until it came Peter's turn. Peter had a peculiar combination of character, part of which was extremely good. He objected to having his feet washed by the Lord, saying, "Dost thou wash my feet? —It is not appropriate, Lord, that one so great as you should serve a person of my standing, a poor fisherman." But our Lord answered that although Peter did not discern the full meaning of the matter, he would explain to him later when he had finished the washing of all. Peter's second remark was less praiseworthy than his first. He said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet."

It was hard for Peter to realize that he was the disciple and the Lord was the Teacher, —that it was for him to obey and not to dictate; but Jesus' answer, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me," at once brought out the better side of Peter's impulsive nature. If his washing had anything to do with his nearness to the Master and his relationship to him, then he wanted it. Going even to the other

extreme again, fearing to leave matters in the Lord's care, he cried,

Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!

There is a lesson for us in this matter: We are not to dictate to the Lord, not to attempt to be wise or good or obedient in ways that he has not directed. This is a hard lesson for some dispositions to learn,—continually they want to do more than is written in the Scriptures. Such a course indicates either a lack of reverence for the Lord and his Word and the wisdom thereof, or else a too great self-confidence, too much self-esteem. A humble and trustful heart should learn to say, Thy will, O, Lord, thy way and in thy time— "Thy will, not mine be done."

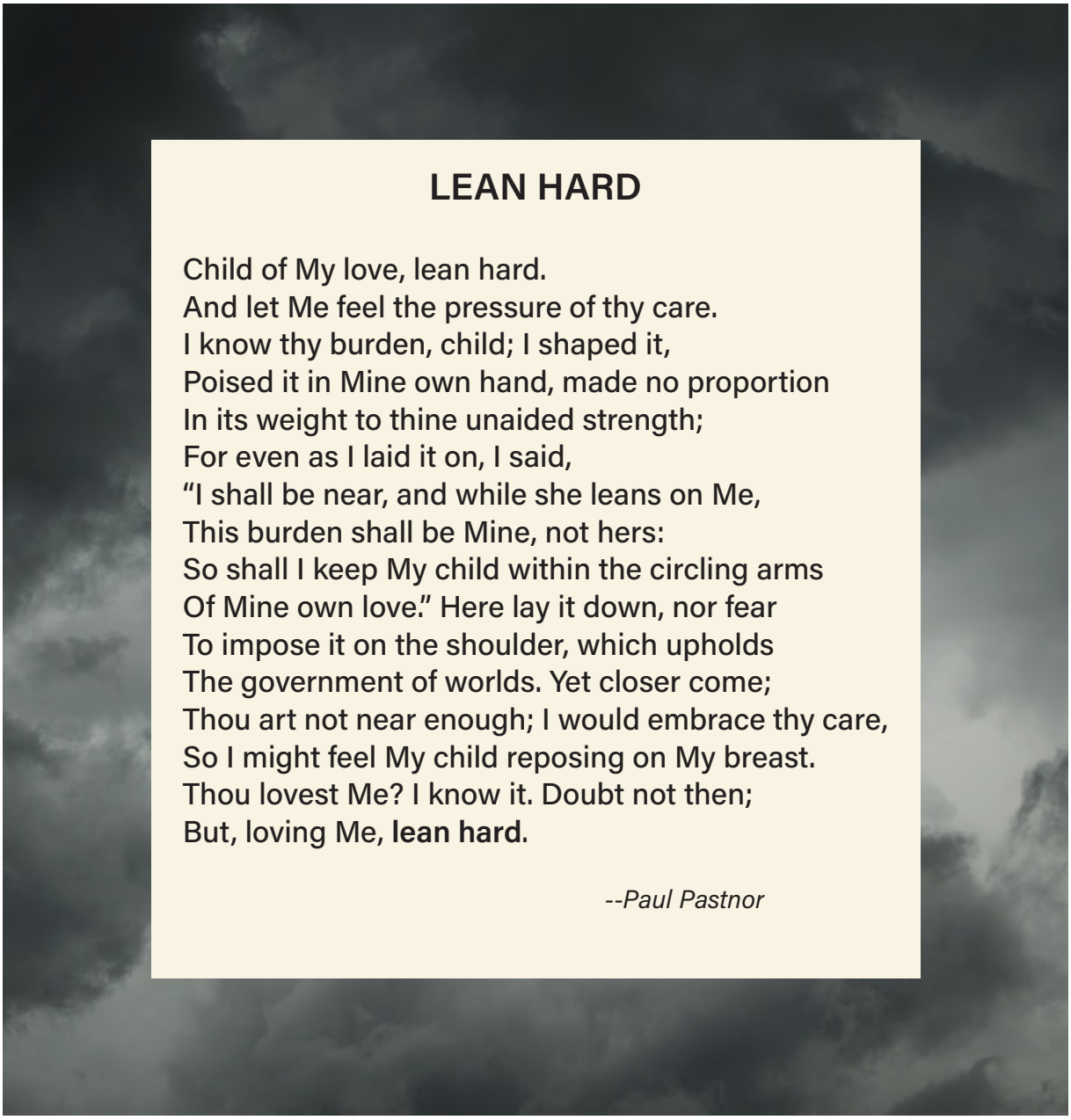
In their fear to be the least, all the disciples had shunned the opportunity of service for the Master and for each other. Our Lord, their acknowledged Head and Master, the Messiah, had humbled himself to serve them all, and had thus rebuked their inhumility, and at the same time set them an example that would apply to every affair of life, namely, that they should be glad to serve one another on every proper occasion, in the high things or in the common affairs of life. This washing of one another's feet we may readily see applies to any and every humble service of life, any and every kindness, though specially to those services and kindnesses which would be along the lines of spiritual assistances and comfort.

How many opportunities we have for comforting, refreshing, consoling and assisting one another in some of the humblest affairs of daily living or in respect to some of the unpleasant duties, experiences or trials of life! By love we are to serve one another, but not as a mere formality. Any service done or attempted to be done in love, with the desire to do good to one of the Lord's people, has, we may be sure, the approval of the Head of the Church.

Let us lose no opportunities of this kind; let us remember the Master's example. Let us not merely assume the guise of humility, but let us actually have that grace of character which will enable us to do kindnesses and service to all with whom

St. Peter had too much reverence to wish the Lord to be his servant. He had as a natural trait, more than had some of the others, that courage, or boldness, which led him to speak out. In all this the Lord was giving a deep spiritual lesson—that no one is naturally fit for the Kingdom. Each one needs to be washed, to be cleansed, before he can be a joint-sufferer, before he can be a joint-heir. He must be a joint-sacrificer in order to become a member of The Christ. Jesus said to His disciples, You have witnessed My humility in this matter, and now I want to tell you that you ought to have this attitude toward one another. You should have been careful for even the humblest one in your number. R. 5091

Four Accounts of Jesus' Warning to Peter



LEAN HARD

Child of My love, lean hard.
And let Me feel the pressure of thy care.
I know thy burden, child; I shaped it,
Poised it in Mine own hand, made no proportion
In its weight to thine unaided strength;
For even as I laid it on, I said,
"I shall be near, and while she leans on Me,
This burden shall be Mine, not hers:
So shall I keep My child within the circling arms
Of Mine own love." Here lay it down, nor fear
To impose it on the shoulder, which upholds
The government of worlds. Yet closer come;
Thou art not near enough; I would embrace thy care,
So I might feel My child reposing on My breast.
Thou lovest Me? I know it. Doubt not then;
But, loving Me, **lean hard.**

--Paul Pastnor

1 - I Will Never Stumble

Matthew 26:31-35

Then Jesus said to them,
"All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I WILL STRIKE THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK WILL BE SCATTERED.' But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."

Peter answered and said to Him,
"Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble."

Jesus said to him,
"Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."

Peter said to Him,
"Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples.

One of the great lessons which the Master taught his followers, and which all in the School of Christ must learn, is that, with burning love and zeal for God and for righteousness, we should also have moderation—exercising the spirit of a sound mind. Christ's followers are exhorted to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Their wisdom is not to be merely the selfish kind, which would look out for its own interests, but of the generous kind which looks out for the interests of all, and particularly for the interests of the Lord's cause and for any share therein which he may entrust to us.

In the course of his instructions, Jesus had said to his disciples, in advance of the trying hour of his betrayal— "All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written (in the Prophets), I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee." —Matt. 26:31,32.

Then spoke the impulsive Peter, "Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." (V. 33) Alas! how little did this courageous man understand the nature of the trials and difficulties immediately before him, or realize the weak points of his own impulsive nature.

Although the twelve apostles had been for three years in very intimate association with Jesus and had been greatly benefited and blessed by the association, they had yet many things to learn, and one of the last lessons that Jesus endeavored to impress

upon them was that of humility and self-forgetful service of others. The occasion of this lesson was furnished by a little discussion among them on the evening of the last supper, as to which should be greatest. The context seems to indicate that the discussion originated with Peter; for while they all seem to have been involved, or at least interested in the discussion, and all were addressed in the Lord's reply, a pointed portion of the answer was addressed specially to Peter. Peter was one of the most prominent and active of the apostles, and by his zeal and energy he naturally became a leading one, as he himself probably realized in a measure, and the others doubtless conceded.

But the Lord realized what the apostles evidently did not, that even a very little prominence may become a dangerous snare unless it be coupled with great humility. Hence the warning to the disciples, and especially to Peter, against the ambition for self-exaltation and preferment.

Peter, while considering the question of superiority with some measure of self-complacency, little knew how great a trial would in a few hours put the metal of his character to the test. Nor did the other disciples comprehend the critical hour to which they had come. But the Lord fully realized it, and endeavored to prepare them for it; and to Peter he solemnly said, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not [under the coming trial], and when thou art converted [from this disposition, to a sober humility, then] strengthen thy brethren." The other brethren would also need strengthening, and Peter's hopefulness and fervent devotion and leading characteristics would be of great service to them; but not until he himself should first come into the proper attitude. But Peter, still unconscious of his weakness and his need, though full of loving loyalty to the Lord, replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee into prison and to death." But Jesus knew his weakness, and said, "I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me"; and it was so. So great was the trial that all the disciples were in dismay, and though they loved the Lord, yet in fear they all forsook him and fled (Matt. 26:56); and while Peter, loth to leave him, followed him afar off, yet by and by his devotion succumbed to his fears so that he openly denied him.

How much Peter needed the Lord's prayer and warning, and how graciously the Lord considered his need! But while we thus view Peter's error and Peter's need, as well as the needs of all the disciples, let us not forget our own; for we also are men of like passions: a very little exaltation, a very little success or praise or preferment, often serves to engender a pride of heart which becomes manifest to others in unbecoming self-inflation and self-exaltation. Let us guard against these tendencies by prayer and by the cultivation of humble, sober thought. R. 4712 and R. 1987

2 - He Spoke More Vehemently

Mark 14:27-31

Then Jesus said to them,
"All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I WILL STRIKE THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP WILL BE SCATTERED.' But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."

Peter said to Him,
"Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be."

Jesus said to him,
"Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times."

But he spoke more vehemently,
"If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all said likewise.

Following the institution of the Supper which memorializes His death, Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn, and then went out of the city to the Mount of Olives opposite—-a distance of perhaps a mile. Apparently several important lessons were given to the disciples en route to Gethsemane. En route for Gethsemane, Jesus sought to impress upon his disciples the fact that they were entering a great crisis. He quoted to them the prophecy,

I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.
Zechariah 13:7



The Walk to The Garden of Gethsemane by James Tissot

He said to them plainly that as a result they would all be offended—discouraged, stumbled, amazed. The thing that they were not expecting would occur.

St. Peter, full of confidence in his own devotion to the Lord, denied this, declaring that it would not be true in his case—that even though it should be true of all the others, he was ready to die with the Master, rather than to deny Him. Jesus still insisted that St. Peter was in great danger. He was trusting too much to his flesh, and not looking to God and prayerfully watching against temptation. Indeed, all the disciples joined in the same remonstrance against the accusation that Jesus had made. They declared themselves loyal and ready for death. How little they knew what severe trials would come upon them!

Surely there is a lesson here for all the followers of Jesus—today as well as then. It is right that we should feel ourselves thoroughly determined to be loyal to the Lord's Cause to our very last breath; for such a determination is very necessary to victory. The mistake made by many is in not realizing how severe the trials and temptations may become—in not realizing the necessity of Heavenly assistance in our every time of need. The Apostle wrote, "When I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Corinthians 12:10.) By this he doubtless meant, When fully loyal to the Lord, I feel my own weakness and insufficiency, but I am strong because then I rely especially upon Heavenly aid —then I watch and pray, and am thus forewarned against the temptations.

Doubtless in the end of this Age—in the closing days of this Gospel Dispensation —there will come Gethsemane experiences to the Church of Christ. Those who will stand those temptations and trials, and come off victorious, will be the ones whose faith and trust in the Lord are strong—those who watch and pray lest they enter into temptation, and who are thus safeguarded against it. As our Lord forewarned St. Peter and the other Apostles of their coming trial, so He has forewarned us of the great crucial test near at hand. Let us profit by the experiences of the Apostles recorded in this lesson.

Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.
1 Corinthians 10:12

This text voices to all Christians the lesson of St. Peter's experiences. When we are weak in our own estimation and, full of faith, cling tenaciously to the Arm of the Lord, then we are really strong in the might which God supplies through His Eternal Son. However different the experiences of God's people, all who fall into line for the great promotion to the First Resurrection must expect to endure severe siftings, provings—of their love for the Lord, the Truth, the brethren, and their loyalty to all these.

Let us never forget that siftings are permitted, not because the Lord has no interest in us, but because only those who can stand siftings, trials and tests, are fit for places in the Kingdom. R. 5550 and R. 5563

3 - I Am Ready to Go With You Luke 22:31-34

And the Lord said,
"Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail, and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."

But he said to Him,
"Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death."

Then He said,
"I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me."

As the Passover season approached our Lord not only said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death," and found himself pleading "with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him out of death;" but additionally he had great solicitude for his dear followers, and sought to arouse them to an appreciation of the hour of temptation into which they were entering, saying, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Not only was that the most trying time of our Lord's earthly experience, but it was also the most trying time for his apostles, and particularly for Judas and Peter. Both of these men were prominent amongst the apostles, the one as the treasurer and purchasing agent of the little group, the other as a specially bold champion of the Lord's cause, who had, as the mouthpiece of the twelve, announced their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, and who had publicly declared that although all men should forsake the Lord he would not do so. From the human standpoint it would have been surmised that any temptation that might come upon those thirteen would have been upon the weaker and less prominent ones and not upon the three most prominent.

That was a fateful time for Judas: If the Adversary could so juggle, deceive and mislead the true-hearted Peter because he was off his guard in watching and praying, what might we not expect he might be able to accomplish with Judas, whose heart was not right, who was selfish, self-seeking, ambitious, covetous? We cannot wonder that Satan's victory over Judas was soon accomplished---that he fell quickly into the snare of the Adversary, and lent his heart and energy to the betrayal of the Master for thirty pieces of silver. His case was very different from that of Peter, the loyal, the true, for the moment bewildered and off his guard and fearful. The cases of the two men are very different because, although the danger was the same, their hearts were in different conditions.

Is it not so with all of the Lord's followers? Is not this the secret of the differing results of temptation as they surely come to each one of us? The Judas class of today and always are those who when temptation comes receive it, entertain it, enter into

the spirit of the ambition or otherwise wrong allurement, and are swallowed up by it. The Peter class is also with us ever since; and today the true-hearted, but not sufficiently watching and praying and on guard against the Adversary's allurements, are at times taken unawares, and for a moment not only dishonor the Lord but dishonor their own hearts and consciences also. The difference between these two classes is the heart condition: the Peter class do those things which they do not wish to do, or leave undone those things which they really desire to do, and their difficulty lies evidently in the weakness of their flesh, in the power of the Adversary, and in their failure to lay hold upon the help which the Lord has promised, the succor in their time of need.

The Judas class are those whose hearts are not loyal but selfish, and who therefore enter into the Adversary's scheme heartily, and are not, in their wrong course, going contrary to their own wills but in harmony therewith.

For all of the Peter class the Lord is the Head, the Representative, the Advocate before the Father. Without his aid, without appearance for us and application to us of the merit of his own sacrifice, none of us could stand, all would be judged unworthy, unfit to have part or lot in the great blessings which the Lord has invited us to share with Jesus. And as the Master prayed for such, intercedes for such, makes good the unwilling imperfections of such, so should all who have his Spirit feel generously, kindly, sympathetically, speak helpfully to the Peter class. But as the Master had no such words of sympathy for Judas, the open and premeditated enemy and traitor, so likewise, whatever our sorrowful feelings for such may be, there is no room for any expression of sympathy or cooperation in their evil work: as for any of the apostles to cooperate with Judas would have meant a share in his evil deeds.

However much sympathy we may feel with Peter and others of similar character and experience—since, however much we may rejoice with him that the Lord prayed for him so that his carelessness in the matter of watching and praying for himself did not result in his undoing and his loss of relationship to the Lord—nevertheless we should strive not to be of the Peter class, but of the class represented by our Lord himself. Let us be of the watching, praying and faithful kind, who will not be overtaken by the Adversary's temptations of the present time. R. 3759

It is the specially loyal and ardent that the Adversary seeks most persistently to entrap. Thus Jesus, on this very occasion, explained to St. Peter, "Satan hath desired to have thee that he might sift thee" (Luke 22:31); that he might separate you from your loyalty to Christ and discourage you from discipleship, overwhelming you with fear and with your own weaknesses. The Master added, "But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." We may well understand that the same loving Master still assists all of his true, warmhearted followers, whatever their weaknesses of heredity. We may well understand, too, that he is able to develop all such into strong characters, if they abide in his love, continuing in their zeal. He is able to make all things work together for their good—even the weaknesses of heredity may work out for the faithful that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" which the Lord has promised. R. 4712

4 - I Will Lay Down My Life

John 13:36-38

Simon Peter said to Him,
"Lord, where are You going?"

Jesus answered him,
"Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward."

Peter said to Him,
"Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake."

Jesus answered him,
"Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times."

After washing the disciples' feet, and after the sop had been given to Judas, and he had gone out; and after telling the disciples that they all would be offended that night because of him, and answering Peter that he would deny him thrice before the cock crew, we may well suppose that the hearts of the eleven were heavy, disturbed, troubled with fearful forebodings. Had they indeed been deluded, or had they misunderstood the Master when he told them that he was the Messiah, the heir of the Kingdom, and that they should sit with him in his throne? How could they interpret his language, seeing that only five days before he had received the hosannas of the multitude as the Son of David, the King of Israel, when riding on the ass? What could it mean that the Master was now "exceeding sorrowful" and spoke of betrayal, and of their dispersion and of his own death?

The apostles were already consecrated to God as his servants, before they came in contact with Jesus; they already believed in God, trusted in him, were Israelites indeed without guile. This is testified to further by our Lord's prayer, in which he says, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." The trouble in their hearts was not in respect to the foundations of their hopes, for these were all established. They not only knew and trusted God, but knew and trusted also the promises of God respecting the Kingdom and the blessing that should come to all the families of the earth through it. The whole question before their minds was respecting Jesus:—Was he indeed the Messiah, or had they built some false expectations upon his wonderful words and deeds? How should they understand it if now, after three and a half years of ministry he should die at the hands of his enemies, instead of establishing his Kingdom and subduing all things to himself, as they had expected? He had said that he was going away, and that whither he went they could not come. How could they understand these matters, and harmonize them?

They had not yet learned the meaning of the words which early in his ministry our Lord had addressed to Nicodemus—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God;"—"Except a man be born of water and of spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." (John 3:3,5.) But these were spiritual truths, and could not be appreciated until Pentecost would bring them the anointing of the holy spirit, and permit them to "comprehend with all saints the lengths and breadths and heights and depths" of the divine plan. But they did need some comfort, and the Master proceeded to give them the best and the strongest spiritual food, instruction, that they were able to receive. He had many things to tell them, but they could not bear them then, could not understand them, until the anointing of the holy spirit would prepare their hearts.

It was in answer to these their troubled thoughts that our Lord spoke to them the beautiful words of comfort and consolation recorded in the 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th chapters of John's Gospel, beginning—

Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

Our Lord began by reviving in them their faith in the Father and in his plan, saying, Ye believe in God, —believe also in me: recognize the fact that all of the Father's plan will be accomplished, and inasmuch as you have seen my loyalty to the Father in word and in deed, and inasmuch as you have seen the Father's power unto good works manifested in me, let faith's anchor hold; continue to trust me, continue to have confidence, and you shall have a blessing; wait for the development of the divine plan, and it will more than satisfy your highest expectations. You are perplexed because I said that I am going away—going to the Father, but let me explain to you that my going is in your interest: I go to prepare a place for you in my Father's house of many apartments; and as surely as I do this I will come again and receive you unto myself, that we may henceforth be together forever. R. 2453

For three years our Lord had been making himself known to his disciples, and also making them acquainted with the Father's character; and hence, when he now informed them that he was going home to the Father, they were to feel that they knew the Father better than ever, and could better than ever appreciate such a home of righteousness and true happiness as he would provide and maintain. Moreover, their experience with the Lord, and under his instructions and leading, had made them acquainted with the way to God, even though they did not recognize it as such. Hence our Lord's declaration,

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
John 14:6



Watch and Pray

Matthew 26:36-41

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples,
"Sit here while I go and pray over there."

And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them,
"My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me."

He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying,
"O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter,
"What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

As we consider the solemn scenes of this lesson, let it be with reverence and deep gratitude, remembering it was our load the Master bore, that it was the chastisement of our peace that was upon him, and that with his stripes we are healed.

The narrative, so familiar to every Christian, is one full of precious lessons, especially to those who, by his grace, are endeavoring to follow in the Lord's footsteps. We observe:

1 that when the Master realized that his hour of betrayal and fierce temptation was close at hand, having first comforted, counselled, and prayed for and with his disciples, his next strong impulse was to seek a solitary place for prayer and communion with God, that he might find grace to help in time of need.

2 We note also his love for his disciples, and his desire for their love and sympathy in return. "Having loved his own, he loved them to the end." And because he loved them, and knew that they loved him, he permitted them to accompany him to the place of prayer, that they might watch and pray with him.

Our Lord probably had two reasons for going forth as he did that night. First, realizing that he would be arrested by the traitor Judas and the band he would bring, our Lord probably did not wish to bring commotion or trouble upon the friend who had so kindly permitted him the use of the upper room. Secondly, he desired the still quiet of midnight, out upon the hillside where he could be alone

with God, to pour out his soul in prayer and obtain the strength necessary for the ordeal at hand.

We find that when our Lord reached the entrance to the orchard he left eight of the disciples there, as an outer guard, so to speak, or as pickets, to give notice; and took with him the same three disciples whom he had specially honored on other occasions, Peter, James and John: Peter, the bold and impulsive, James and John, the so-called "sons of thunder" ---the three most courageous, most zealous, most earnest, of his disciples. These he wished to have nearest to himself in this time of anxiety. And yet, on this occasion, he desired to be still more alone in his prayer, for even these truest friends could not appreciate the situation: "of the people there were none with him." Hence he left these and went a stone's throw further, where he prostrated himself upon his knees, and with his face to the earth, as the various accounts show, and thus, alone, he communed with the Father.

The different accounts of our Lord's experience on this occasion, grouped together, show us that mental anguish seemed to come upon him here with a force of poignancy he had never before experienced; and that the load became increasingly heavy--- "sorrowful even unto death," a sorrow which almost crushed out his very life, says **Matthew.**
Mark says (14:33) that he was "sore amazed," as though the sorrow had come upon him unexpectedly, as though he were bewildered.
Luke, who was a physician, says that he was "in an agony," a contest, a struggle, the language used in the Greek implying a struggle of increasing force and severity, so that "his sweat became as it were great drops of blood;"* and this bloody sweat is not unknown to physicians today, although very rare. It marks an extreme tension of feeling---sorrow nigh unto death.

After praying awhile he went to the three disciples, in whom he had greatest confidence, and who, more than any others, were his tried and trusted companions, but he found them asleep. Luke explains that their sleep was the result of sorrow. The night and its lessons had been impressive; the memorial supper, which they did not fully understand, nevertheless left a weight of sorrow upon them, as the Master had intimated that it represented his death, and had further intimated that one of their number would betray him. The reaction from the sorrow brought a measure of stupor. Very gently our Lord upbraided them: "Could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation." It is not merely that you need to watch on my account; you need to be in a watching attitude on your own account. An hour of severe trial is upon us all; watch and pray lest ye fall in this evil time.

It was no sign of weakness in the Master that he thus craved human sympathy. His was no coarse, stoical nature, insensible to pain and shame and loss; nor was it a proud, self-centered nature which stood aloof from human fellowship, although those with whom he associated were so far beneath his glorious perfection. Gracefully he condescended to men of low estate, and esteemed them brethren beloved, of whom he was not ashamed. His was a refined nature, keenly appreciative

*Questionable passage--not found in Vatican MS

of all that is lovely and pure and good, and correspondingly sensitive to pain from everything to the contrary of these.

He foresaw the terrible calamities that in consequence must soon overwhelm them. Then the degradation of a whole guilty world, which must continue to groan and travail in pain until by his sacrifice he should gain deliverance for them from sin and death, caused him to feel the burden of responsibility to an extent which we can only approximate, but cannot fully comprehend. And in addition to all this was his knowledge of the fact that every jot and tittle of the law with reference to the sacrifice must be perfectly fulfilled according to the pattern in the typical sacrifice of the day of atonement. If he should fail in any part of the work, all would be lost, both for himself and for men. And yet, though a perfect man, he realized that the flesh, however perfect, was unequal to the task.

How much depended upon our Lord's fortitude in that awful hour, alone and defenceless in the darkness of overwhelming night, awaiting the certain arrival of his betrayer and the will of his persecutors maddened with hate and full of the energy of Satan! Oh, how the destinies of the world and of himself seemed to tremble in the balances! Even the perfect human nature was not equal to such an emergency without divine aid, therefore it was that he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him who was able to save him from death, by a resurrection. The necessary comfort was provided through the Prophet:

Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him. He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand. I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles.
Isaiah 42:1,6

As we thus view our Lord under a trial so crucial, and mark how the hand of Jehovah upheld him, let it strengthen the faith of all who are endeavoring to walk in his footsteps, to whom he says, Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world: and this is the victory that overcometh, even your faith. (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4.) Has not the Lord, Jehovah, commissioned his angels also to bear up the "feet" of the body of Christ, lest at any time they be dashed against a stone (lest some overwhelming trial should prove too much for them)? (Psa. 91:11,12.) Yes, as surely as his hand upheld the Head, our Lord Jesus, so surely will he bear up the feet.

Just as soon as Jesus received this assurance, He became very calm. If He had the **Father's** favor, the **Father's** blessing, He could pass through **any experience**, no matter what it might be! Then he returned to His disciples intimating that He had gotten the victory. He was no longer in trouble. He had said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." But now confidence had come, in the assurance God had given Him.

Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.
The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.
Mark 14:28

In the case of our Lord and the apostles we see illustrated the value of watchfulness and prayer in the dark hour of trouble. Our Lord followed the direction he gave to the disciples: he watched, he prayed, he got a blessing, he was strengthened, and came off victor. They did not watch and did not pray, failing to realize the necessities of the occasion, and as a result we find them scattered, bewildered; —- and one of them, the very strongest of them all, who boastingly had said a little while before, "Though all men forsake thee yet will not I," was so overpowered by his surroundings, and so weak through lack of the very strength he should have obtained through watching and prayer, that he denied the Lord with profanity.

Whenever we find the Lord's people attempting to live a life of holiness and consecration, yet ignoring the injunction of our Lord to watch and pray, we know that they are unwise; they cannot hope to gain the victory over self and sin and the Adversary, single-handed, alone. If the Master himself needed strengthening, surely we also need it; and if he received it in response to supplications with strong cryings and tears, it is an intimation to us of the way in which God is pleased to bestow the full assurance of faith which is able to strengthen us as good soldiers to endure any and everything in his name and service. Those who seek the Lord earnestly and in prayer are as sure to receive a blessing as was the Lord Jesus himself.

The present is represented in the Scriptures to be "the hour of temptation" or testing at the close of this age. It is the Gethsemane hour, in this sense of the word, to all who are the Lord's true people, fully consecrated to him. We are to watch, and to be on our guard against the encroachments of the world, the flesh and the devil. We are to watch for all the encouragements of the Lord's Word, the evidence of their fulfillment, the signs that betoken his presence and the great changes of dispensation just at hand. We are to watch for everything that will strengthen us in faith and hope and loyalty and love.

While watching we are to pray without ceasing. We are to pray together as the Lord's people; we are to pray in our homes, as families; we are to pray in secret, in private. We are to have the spirit of prayer in all that we say and do: that is to say, our hearts should be going out continually to the Lord for guidance in all of life's affairs, that we may do with our might what our hands find to do, in a manner that will be acceptable to him, and that we may be shielded by him from temptation that would otherwise be beyond our endurance, and that we may be ultimately delivered from the Evil One and have a place in our Lord's Kingdom. Brethren and sisters, let us more and more remember and put into practice, in every home these words of our Lord,

Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

R. 1801, R. 2773, R. 5331

A High Priest's Servant

John 18:3-11

Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them,
"Whom are you seeking?"

They answered Him,
"Jesus of Nazareth."

Jesus said to them,
"I am He."

And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. Then He asked them again,
"Whom are you seeking?"

And they said,
"Jesus of Nazareth."



The Procession of Judas by James Tissot

Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way," that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none."

Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. So Jesus said to Peter,
"Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"

Now commenced the realization of the dreadful forebodings of Gethsemane. From the various Gospel records we find that Judas, leaving the company of the Lord and the eleven apostles, went again to the Chief Priests, with whom he had already been in conference. He finished the bargain and became the guide of a band of temple guards or temple policemen and their followers. These, armed with their clubs or maces, took with them lights needed for the searching of the foliage, although the moon was at its full. From the standpoint of the rulers the midnight hour was the most favorable because a large concourse of people then in Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover included many who knew Jesus and had been witnesses of his miracles and his arrest in day time might have led to a tumult.

Our Lord's agony, prayer and comforting at an end, he returned to the apostles, saying, "Sleep on now, and take your rest." Your opportunity for watching with me or speaking a word of comfort has passed; your opportunity for waking your own hearts and minds to prayer as a safeguard against coming trials and testings is past. Behold the band of those who will arrest me! A little ahead of the band came Judas, who indicated the Master by the traitorous kiss, which John, for very shame, did not record. Judas, finding his deception recognized as the Master said,

Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?
(Luke 22:48)

left him and joined the band who had come for his arrest, while Jesus, coming out of the cover into the open, said, "Whom seek ye?" After he had answered their reply, saying, "I am he, let these my friends go their way," we read that the men went backward and fell on the ground. This was doubtless the result of a power our Lord exercised upon them, the power by which he might have resisted them entirely had he so desired. What he did was sufficient to show them and his apostles that his surrender was not one of necessity, but that the Father's will might be done.

Mark his calm, dignified fortitude, as he addresses Judas and the Roman soldiers, and its effect upon them. They were so overpowered with the grandeur and nobility of this wonderful man that they could not have taken him had he not voluntarily placed himself in their hand. Notice, too, his kind consideration for the bewildered and weary disciples, and his loving excuse for them, "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak," and his request to the Roman soldiers at the time of his arrest that they might be permitted to go their way (John 18:8), that so they might escape sharing in his persecutions. So through all the trial and mocking, and finally the crucifixion, his courage and solicitude for the welfare of others never failed.

The "band" sent to apprehend him evidently expected that they might be obliged to seek for him in the shadows of the trees, etc., and hence they were provided with torches and lanterns. Unquestionably they were greatly surprised that our Lord, instead of fleeing from them, advanced to them, and inquired whom they sought. Quite possibly some of those in the "band" had previous knowledge of the Lord—-of his miracles, power over devils, etc., and this may have been the

reason for their manifestation of weakness in retreat and falling to the ground. Or it is possible that our Lord exercised over them a superior mental power which produced this effect, for the purpose of showing that he had full power to resist them if he had chosen to use it.

The same lesson, we believe, is taught by Peter's use of the sword upon the high priest's servant. We are to remember that one of the Evangelists records that our Lord instructed the apostles to take swords with them, and that when two were found he said, "It is enough." (Luke 22:36,38.) Our Lord had no thought of having his disciples war a carnal warfare on his behalf, as he subsequently stated, "If my kingdom were of this world then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." (John 18:36.) The two swords were sufficient to show that our Lord's apprehension was not because there were no means of defence, nor because of cowardice on the part of his disciples, but merely because of his submission—knowing that his hour was come, and that thus it behooved him to suffer for our sins and to enter into his glory. —Luke 24:46.

It was probably when Jesus began to be bound that Peter drew his sword in his defence; perhaps he remembered the Lord's words of a few hours previous, to the effect that his followers would all forsake him, and his own promise, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." (Mark 14:29.) Noble, zealous Peter! We love him for his noble expression of sentiment, and for his heroic defence of the Master with the sword against superior numbers. It is the custom of many to decry Peter's action, as another of his rash errors. We are to remember, however, that the Apostles had not yet received the holy Spirit and therefore could not clearly appreciate the fact that the Kingdom to which they were called is a spiritual Kingdom. Besides, as we have seen, he was merely following the Lord's counsel in taking the sword with him, and evidently also carrying out the divine purpose in using it. We see nothing to blame, everything to commend. It was a sign of larger import than Peter and the others there realized.

But having permitted the matter to go thus far, our Lord restrained Peter, saying, "Suffer yet thus far. Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And so saying he touched his wounded enemy and healed him. The disciples were to see, understand, be fully assured, that our Lord, in delivering himself to his enemies, did it voluntarily, and hence the proceedings were so pantomimed as to enforce this lesson.

The healing of the smitten ear, our Lord's last miracle, was most beautifully illustrative of his character and teachings. It exemplified his words, "Love your enemies, do good to them that persecute you." It showed that he was filled with the divine love which his teachings inculcated, and that he had no bitterness toward those who despitefully used and persecuted him. R. 4169, R. 1801, R. 2468

At a Distance

Luke 22:54

Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house. But Peter followed at a distance.

At first glance it would appear that the disciples were very cowardly when they all forsook the Master at the time of his arrest. But then we must remember that this was our Lord's own suggestion. He said to the officers, "If I am the one you seek, let these go their way." They discerned that they could be of no use to the Lord after he was in the hands of the high priests, who represented the civil court, the law of the land, and whom they knew to be prejudiced against Jesus. They may have even taken Jesus' words to imply a command that they should go their way. Furthermore they were perplexed: they had been expecting such different results from their adherence to Jesus. When they looked for his exaltation he talked about his crucifixion, was sad and distressed, and now was arrested. Everything was perplexing, disheartening, and they probably went to their homes thoroughly discouraged, except Peter and John, who followed him afar off.

And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in.
John 18:15-16

Although it is declared that all the disciples fled, John points out that Peter and himself followed at a distance. Their deep interest in the Master would not permit them to go to their homes; they must keep him in sight, and note how things would go with him to the very last. They were powerless to assist him against such great odds, and in the face of his own refusal to be assisted, but they were not powerless to love still. John, it seems, was somewhat acquainted at the high priest's palace, and readily gained entrance, not only for himself but for Peter.

But these favors and privileges became tests to Peter and led to his denial of the Lord. And so it is with some of the Lord's followers of today. When they are by themselves, or with others of like precious faith, they are bold and courageous to confess the Lord and to serve him, but if perchance they get into palaces or amongst the servants and officers and high priests of nominal Christianity they are ashamed of the Master and fear to confess him, lest they should be cast out of the privileges enjoyed in the society of those who have not yet recognized the truth. Far better would it have been for poor Peter had he openly declared, "Yes, I am one of his disciples, and since I presume that none such are wanted here I will go out." How much so honorable and proper a course would have reflected to his credit in the eyes of all just persons, and how much blessing it would have brought to him! R. 3888 and R. 2469

Three Times

Luke 22:34

I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.

The noble Peter had but a short time before declared, "Lord, though all men forsake thee, yet will not I" He did not realize the importance of the hour; he knew not, as the Master did, how serious were the testings and how close; he knew not that it was a very short time until the Master's words would be fulfilled. "Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice." Ah, had he realized as the Master did the trials that were near, how vigilant he doubtless would have been! And is it not so with us today? Are we not as the Lord's people in this harvest-time drawing close to the Gethsemane hour of the Church? Are we not already in the hour of temptation to a considerable extent? Will not the last members of the body soon follow the Head unto complete sacrifice? How ready are we for the ordeal? Are we asleep, or are we heeding the words of the Apostle, They that sleep sleep in the night, but we who are of the day should be awake, sober, putting on the whole armor of God that we may be able to stand in this evil day, in the time of trial already upon us, and in the still severer trials which no doubt will be ours in the near future? Are we prepared for the time when there will possibly be a general scattering, as these "all forsook him and fled"? How courageous we will be in our hour of trial will probably depend much upon our following the Master's example and securing first of all that positive conviction that we have the divine approval. Let us not then avoid the Gethsemane moment if it comes to us in the Lord's providence, but let us also with strong cryings and tears look up to him who is able to save us out of death by the glorious First Resurrection, and let us remember that we have an Advocate, we have a helper. The Lord is our angel who speaks to us the Father's message, telling us that if we abide in his love all will be right in the end, and that he is able and willing to bring us off conquerors, yea, more than conquerors through his own merit. R. 3887

As Jesus stood before the high priest, and as his enemies brought witnesses and the trial progressed, our Lord may be said to have made no defence; it would have been useless anyway, as they were intent on finding a charge of some kind—they had murder in their hearts. The charge they sought to establish was blasphemy, one of the few charges the penalty of which under the Law was death, and it was his death they wanted.

Meantime the Apostle Peter was having a great trial, too. He had gained access to the outer room of the court and could probably hear or see something from where he stood and warmed himself at the fire. The first instinct of nature, self-preservation, overpowered him. It flashed upon him that if he were recognized as one of Jesus' subordinates he might be treated in the same manner as the Master.

Temptations will come in an insidious form. We cannot imagine that at the time when he cut off the ear of the high priest's servant St. Peter had any sympathy with the thought of denying our Lord. But circumstances and conditions changed. The Master was taken a prisoner. Whatever power He had previously exercised whereby He walked away from His enemies, and they could not take Him because His "hour had not yet come," that power He evidently was not exercising now—His hour had come. To see his Master apparently without friends in Heaven, delivered over to His enemies and led from one tribunal to the other, had a paralyzing effect upon St. Peter.

St. John had such an acquaintance with some one connected with the palace that he was permitted to enter the court and bring St. Peter with him; but they had separated. St. Peter was in the courtyard. It was cold, and he approached an open brazier to warm himself. In the light of the court, surrounded by the gossiping servants of the palace, he was keenly scrutinized by one of the maids.

And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth." But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are saying."
Mark 14:67-68

Stunned by the identification and wondering to what it might lead, St. Peter promptly denied that he had any knowledge of Jesus. Then he moved away to another part of the court, where the shadows were deeper and the people fewer. Peter's failure to take the proper course brought him later to a still more trying situation, when a kinsman of the man whose ear he had cut off asked him point-blank the question, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?"

One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"
John 18:26

Matters were getting pretty close for poor Peter. It was more now than a question of leaving the fire and the privileges and honor of the high priest's court: it was now

a question of his identity as the one who had defended Jesus with a sword, and hence a question of his own arrest and trial at the same tribunal with the Master. One false step leads naturally to another; to have now declared for Jesus would have been a public testimony that he was a liar, in addition to leading to his apprehension, and so Peter concluded that in self-defence he must not only repeat the lie, and again deny the Master.

A little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, "Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you." Then he began to curse and swear, saying, "I do not know the Man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So he went out and wept bitterly.
Matthew 26:73-75

Truly, as our Lord told him, Satan had desired to have him, to sift him, and surely he was being severely sifted at this time. It seems almost a miracle that he recovered his balance and repented and found forgiveness for his sins. It would seem that our Lord's prayer on his behalf operated through his previous announcement to Peter of this denial, for after he had thus denied, and after he had noticed the cock crow, Peter remembered the Lord's words, "The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice." With feelings better imagined than they can be described, Peter hastily left the High Priest's apartments now of his own accord, going out into the shadows of early morning, that he might weep bitterly and entreat the Lord's forgiveness.


Peter Went Out and Wept Bitterly by James Tissot, c. 1886-1894

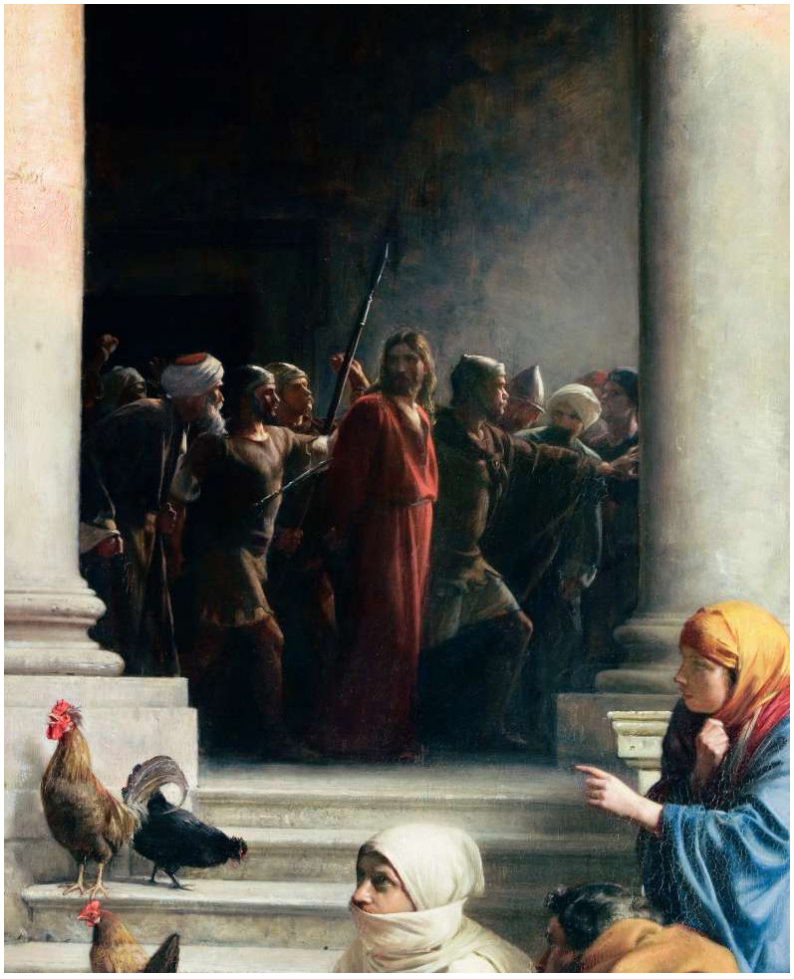
There is a lesson for us in the fact that Peter's failure was along the very line of his strength. He was naturally courageous, had boasted of it, and yet failed for lack of courage. "When I am weak then I am strong," implies that he who feels himself strong is really weak, as in Peter's case. Let us all learn to specially guard our supposedly strong points of character, remembering that we have a wily foe. We are to realize our weakness, our vulnerableness at any point, except as we keep watch at every point and rely upon the great Captain of our salvation to assist us.
R. 4487, R. 3367, R. 5563, R. 2469

The Lord Turned

Luke 22:60-61

Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.

Jesus turned and looked at Peter! That look was sufficient. It spoke volumes to St. Peter's loyal heart. It was not a look of disdain, nor one of anger, we may be sure. It was a look of loving sympathy. It melted St. Peter's heart.



The Denial of Peter by Carl Heinrich Bloch, 1873

Just at that time, [in the] the early morning, Peter remembered the Master's words that Satan had desired to sift him as wheat, and that before the cock crew he would have denied his Master three times. The whole matter came upon him with crushing force; and, wrapping his cloak about his head, he hastened away into the darkness, weeping bitterly; for just about the time that the cock crew, Jesus was led forth not far from him, and as he looked at Jesus, the Master lifted up His eyes and looked at St. Peter. It was a sympathetic glance, not an angered one; but it went straight to the heart. R. 4712 and R. 5563

Bitter Tears

Matthew 26:75

And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So he went out and wept bitterly.



A sorrow came to me today — a grief so dense and deep,
The shades of deepest darkness about my heartstrings creep;
The tears have flowed unceasing, till no power is left to weep.
I bow beneath my weight of woe, speechless and stunned; my heart
Sinks down like lead within my breast; its bitter ache and smart
Seem almost more than I can bear. A sharp and cruel dart
Hath pierced me, and I prostrate lie. O Father, speak to me!
Thy hand lies hard upon me: can this trial come from Thee?
Stepping stone or stumbling stone, which shall this sorrow be?

---Alice G. James

Peter's weakness on this occasion, afterwards so bitterly lamented and acknowledged and forgiven, has in some respects been a great blessing to all of the Lord's followers as they found that they, too, had weaknesses, and that sometimes they were overtaken in a fault as was Peter. They have learned from Peter to weep bitterly for these shortcomings, and have not been utterly cast down when they have found that Peter was received again by the Lord and heartily forgiven, and that the lesson thus learned made a deep impression on his life and resulted evidently in his favor. It is related of Peter that ever after this he arose every morning at cock crowing, made a fresh remembrance before the Lord of his weakness on that occasion, and accepted divine forgiveness. It was a testing time to Peter, and so similarly testing times come to all of us. Let us see to it that under no circumstances shall we ever deny our Lord. R. 3368

Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center.

John 19:14-18



Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there, and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

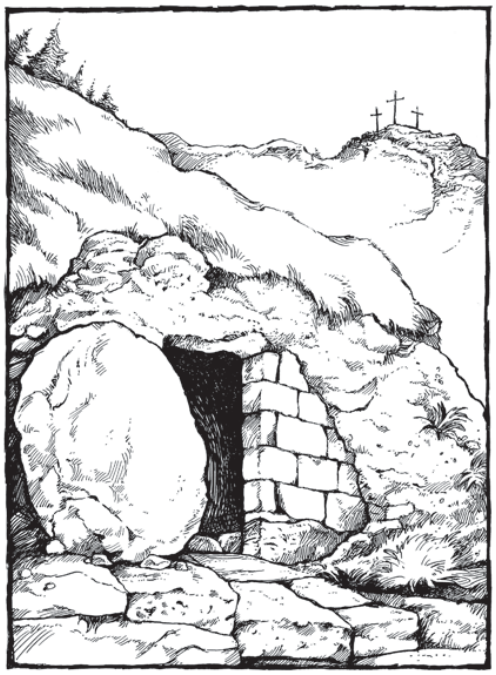
John 19:28-30


He
is
Risen!

Tell His Disciples--and Peter Mark 16:5-8

And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

But he said to them,
"Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples----and Peter----that He is going before you into Galilee. There you will see Him, as He said to you."



So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

After his resurrection we find our Lord promptly taking up his work just where it had been broken off by his death—the work of still further preparing the apostles, his chosen witnesses, to bear reliable testimony to the whole Church. We find that while he appeared to many other disciples besides the apostles, and to upwards of five hundred at one time (1 Cor. 15:5-8), he was specially careful to very clearly establish the fact of his resurrection to the apostles. We find him carefully looking up each one of "the eleven" —sending the women who were first at the sepulcher to communicate the fact of his resurrection to each of them, and specially mentioning Peter, lest he should be overcome with discouragement on account of his previous unfaithfulness; opening the understanding of the two on the way to Emmaus; satisfying doubting Thomas with tangible evidence; specially re-affirming Peter's commission; and fully convincing all and sending them out into the work again.

Surely it was on account of sympathy for St. Peter and appreciation of the tendency he would have to become entirely discouraged that led our Lord to mention St. Peter first amongst the Apostles on the morning of His resurrection, saying to Mary, to whom He first appeared, "Go and tell My disciples, and Peter" —don't let Peter think that he is an outcast. Let him know that I think of him and love him and sympathize with him and have forgiven him, because I know he did it under stress. R. 1522 and R. 5053

So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.
Matthew 28:8

Peter Ran

John 20:1-7

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them,
"They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there, yet he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb, and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself.

Joining the various accounts of the resurrection morning we find (Mark 16:1) that Mary Magdalene was one of the first at the sepulchre while it was yet dark; that with her were Mary, the mother of James and Salome, and (Luke 24:10) Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. On their way they had been wondering who would roll away the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre that they might enter with their spices to complete the embalming work which was discontinued two evenings before because of the Jewish Sabbath then beginning. To their surprise the stone was already rolled away. They tarried awhile wondering, and then in the dim light they perceived that the Lord's body was not there. Perplexed by their further loss Mary hastened to the home of John, with whom Peter was lodging, and related these facts. The two apostles ran to the sepulchre. John, the younger, outrunning Peter, arrived there first. But by this time the other women had departed to communicate the news to the other disciples. Awestricken, John had stooped down and looked in, but Peter, on arrival, still more courageous, went in followed by John. They found things as Mary had described them, the body gone, the linen cloths there. Troubled and perplexed they went their way. Although the indication is that they both believed, their belief was not that the Lord had risen, but that Mary's story was true, that his body had been removed, "for as yet they knew not the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead." —(John 20:8-9) R. 4176

But Peter arose and ran to the tomb. And stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves, and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.
Luke 24:12

The Road to Emmaus

Luke 24:13-27

Now behold, two of them* were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.



The Road to Emmaus by Liz Lemon Swindle

And He said to them,
"What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?"

Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?"

And He said to them,
"What things?"

So they said to Him,
"The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but Him they did not see."

Then He said to them,
"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Fortunate are those who early learn, that while we should greatly appreciate our privilege of talking with the Lord, in prayer, we are to recognize that it is not this that brings the full blessing; but our attentive hearing, understanding and appreciating what he says to us;—the Word of Truth. Our hearts burn while **he talks** and we listen, more than when we talk even to him.

Toward evening of the day of our Lord's resurrection, two of his followers, one of them apparently Simon Peter (vs. 34), the other Cleopas, passed along the country road leading from Jerusalem to Emmaus, about eight miles distant, evidently the home of Cleopas who would entertain Peter, whose home was in Galilee. Like all the followers of Jesus they had been greatly exercised and perturbed by the remarkable events connected with our Lord's last visit, in connection with the Passover—his triumphal entry into Jerusalem; the cleansing of the Temple; the routing of his ecclesiastical foes in debate; his remarkable teachings during those few days; his arrest, trial and crucifixion. The excitement of their hearts made other business for the time impossible, and they spent the day in Jerusalem probably without knowing just why, except that they desired to be in touch with fellow believers. They shared with all the Lord's friends in the considerable excitement, resulting from the reports given by the sisters who went to embalm our Lord's body, that the tomb was empty and that they had seen angels who said that Jesus was alive again.

Full of the subject so close to their hearts, they were discussing in animated conversation the likelihood and unlikelihood of the reports they had heard, and in general the Messianic hopes of themselves and their nation, which they had trusted would have been amply fulfilled by Jesus, whose death seemed to throw all of their expectations into confusion. It was at this juncture that Jesus was drawing near them, disguised in a body of flesh and ordinary clothing—with a face different from what they had previously recognized, yet nevertheless gentle, soothing, sympathetic.

He inquired the occasion of their discussion, which seemed to be respecting some sad subject. This kindly interest was not resented as an intrusion, but rather their burdened hearts rejoiced to find a sympathetic ear to which their perplexities could be related. How much of human nature there is in all this!

It was no deception on our Lord's part to inquire what things they were sad about, although he knew everything better than they. Jesus did not reply to their surprised expression that he must be a newcomer in the city not to have heard of the wonderful things that had recently transpired. He let them proceed to declare their faith in him and how they viewed the situation. The portion of their conversation recorded implies clearly that however much their confidence might have been shaken respecting our Lord's Messiahship, and their hopes, that it would have been he that would have redeemed (delivered) Israel from the Roman yoke and exalted her as God's agency, the seed of Abraham, for blessing all the families of the earth, they

*There is evidence to support the thought that Peter was the second person traveling with Cleopas, and in Reprints 2800 and 2478, Br. Russell entertains this theroy. In an earlier article, he says that the two are not apostles. Others have put forth different theories as to who the other unnamed disciple is in this scene. Here we indulge the idea that it is Peter. (Luke 24:34)

still believed in him as a great Teacher, a prophet—– "mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." This was a good confession, all that could have been asked, and quite sufficient for our Lord to use in rebuilding their confidence in himself, in his Messiahship—–on a surer, a better, a more positive foundation.

While it was expedient for him to start the matter by questioning them, it would not have been wisdom to have continued thus to any great length; for he had the message, they needed the instruction: we, as his followers, may learn a lesson from his course in this also. As soon as he had their minds in the channel to receive the lessons he would give them, he began to **open** unto them the Scriptures concerning himself—–to expound them, to show their true meaning and fulfillment.

We are not informed what features of the Law and the Prophets our Lord enunciated; but we can surmise that he pointed out to them in Moses' writings various features of the Law which pointed to himself as the paschal Lamb, whose death must take place before the first-born and all Israel could be delivered from the bondage of sin, and from the great task-master, prefigured by Pharaoh, and be led ultimately into the Canaan of promise. We can surmise that he recalled to them Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, the typical seed of promise, and how this represented the actual death of Messiah, the antitypical seed, the Son of God. We may presume that he called their attention to various of the psalms, which prophetically spoke, not only of the glories of his reign, but also of his sufferings and his death, and his subsequent exaltation to the right hand of the majesty of God. No doubt he called their attention also to the utterances of Daniel the Prophet, respecting Messiah's being cut off in death, but not for himself. Undoubtedly he reminded them of the words of Isaiah, that Messiah should be led as a lamb to the slaughter, be despised and rejected of men, and how, nevertheless, in due time God would set him as his King upon his holy hill, Zion.

Spellbound with this wonderful exposition of the divine Word, his listeners drank it in, realizing its truth by the manner in which it harmonized the various testimonies of God's Word—–nor did they think for a moment of inquiring of their teacher whether or not he had an ordination from the scribes and Pharisees, with a license to preach. They perceived that he had a divine ordination, and this was fully attested by his ability to make clear to them what other teachers could not make clear.

Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them.
Luke 24:28-29

The eight miles of the journey seemed all too short, as they reached their home, and they were loath to part with the wonderful teacher, whom they supposed they had fallen in with by accident, never dreaming to what extent divine providence was guiding their affairs. It was drawing toward evening, and the stranger was bidding them adieu, as though intent upon a further journey; and indeed, he surely

would have gone from them had they not been sufficiently appreciative of what they had already heard to constrain him earnestly to remain with them and partake of their hospitalities.

Our Lord accepted their urgent invitation and remained; supper was prepared, and recognizing their new acquaintance as a great teacher or prophet they requested that he should return thanks for their evening meal. It was while he was thus asking a blessing upon it and upon them that the eyes of their understanding were opened—it dawned upon them that their guest was no other than Jesus himself! Perhaps the language used in the blessing was such as they had heard him use before, or perhaps in some other way their understanding was opened.

Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him. And He vanished from their sight.
Luke 24:30-31

Having accomplished his purpose, our Lord vanished from their sight. Thus, in addition to the instruction impressed upon their minds, he showed them by this vanishing that he was no longer the **man** Christ Jesus—that he was "changed"—that the resurrected Jesus was a **spirit being**, who could come and go like the wind. They understood why this stranger had been able to present the divine word with such clearness and force and beauty as to cause their hearts to burn with fresh love and zeal and hope.

And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"
Luke 24:32

As soon as the Emmaus brethren recognized their guest, and he vanished, they understood well the meaning of the joy, the refreshment and the burning zeal in their hearts which his expositions of the truth had inspired. They had thus a confirmation of the words of the angels to the sisters in the morning, that Jesus was risen. The news was too good to be kept, even until the next morning. They must and did start immediately for the city, although it was a journey of at least eight miles. How different their feelings as they set out in return from those when they left the brethren at Jerusalem, their hearts sad and their minds full of questionings! Now they were full of joy; for they saw that our Lord's crucifixion, so far from being the end of their hopes, was really the foundation for them; that as our Lord explained, "Thus it behooved Messiah to suffer before he would enter into his glory." R. 2800

So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.
Luke 24:33-35

Fishing Once Again

John 21:3-11

**Simon Peter said to them,
"I am going fishing."**

**They said to him,
"We are going with you also."**

They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore, yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

**Then Jesus said to them,
"Children, have you any food?"**

They answered Him, "No."



Christ Appears on the Shore of Lake Tiberias by James Tissot, 1886-1894

And He said to them,
"Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some."

So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter,
"It is the Lord!"

Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread.

Jesus said to them,
"Bring some of the fish which you have just caught."

Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three, and although there were so many, the net was not broken.

It was now presumably three or four weeks after the Master's resurrection from the dead. The delay in giving this manifestation was evidently for the purpose of testing the faith of the Apostles and of leading them to reach a conclusion respecting their future course, which Jesus wished to correct. So far as we can understand the record, at least two Sundays passed without any further manifestation of Jesus to His disciples, and then, giving up hope, they decided to return to the fishing business and did so. The journey to Galilee and the resumption of business presumably took another week.

During all those thirty days the mental attitude of all the Apostles and the other disciples can be better imagined than described. They were perplexed, they had indeed had evidences of the Master's resurrection; they had had the Scriptures called to their attention which proved that this was necessary and that God had previously so arranged. They had hoped for further conferences with Jesus and that He would have told them definitely what to do.

Instead, left to themselves, the disciples were thoroughly disheartened. They had left all to follow Him, to tell the people that He was the Son of God, the long-promised Messiah, and that He would soon set up His Kingdom, which would bring

blessings, primarily to Israel and, secondarily, through Israel, to all the families of the earth in harmony with the Abrahamic Covenant. Now apparently all of these hopes were dashed, frustrated. How foolish they thought it would seem for them to try to convince the people that a man, crucified as a malefactor, as a blasphemer, was indeed the Messiah! How foolish it would seem to tell of His resurrection! They felt that they could do nothing else than abandon the ministry as a lost cause; and the resumption of the fishing business was the logical conclusion.

They returned to Palestine and took possession of the ships and fishing tackle which they had abandoned three years before in obedience to the Master's call—– "I will make you fishers of men." We can imagine the disappointment of those men; and yet as they looked back and thought of the blessings experienced during the three years of following Jesus they must have felt glad as well as regretful; glad that they had been with the Master, and that they had had such a blessed season of cooperation, but regretful that the whole matter had evidently come to naught; that in the eyes of their neighbors and friends they had made fools of themselves, been deceived; they must have been grieved also because a return to the former occupation would be comparatively distasteful to them. Their first night's experience in the fishing business was calculated to disappoint them greatly; they toiled all night and caught nothing. It looked indeed as though God was punishing them for the course they had taken in becoming disciples of Jesus—–that everything was going wrong. But not so; they were merely being taught needed lessons.

In the morning they beheld a stranger on the shore who beckoned and shouted to know if they had any fish for sale. They replied, No, they had made no catch. The stranger suggested casting the net on the other side of the boat. And, although the suggestion seemed a foolish one, having been so unsuccessful, yet they did so, and immediately the net was filled with fishes! It did not require long for them to learn the lesson. They knew instinctively that the unknown stranger upon the shore was none other than their Master. They remembered a very similar experience at the time they were first called to leave their nets and to become fishers of men.

All interest had just centered in the fishing business, but now boats and fish and nets all lost their value in the estimation of these fishermen. Here was their risen Lord, for whose third appearance they had been waiting now nearly three weeks. Fearing that the Master would disappear, even before he could get to him, St. Peter plunged into the sea and swam ashore. To his surprise the stranger already had fish and had them cooked, and all were invited to join in the breakfast on the shore of Galilee. R. 5052 and R. 4183

The devoted and impulsive Peter whose heart still burned as he remembered the Lord's words, and perhaps as he remembered also his own weaknesses in connection with our Lord's last night of earth-life, could not wait for the boat to take him to the shore, but swam, —–apparently fearing lest the Master should disappear again before he would have another opportunity to see and converse with him. R. 2806

Breakfast with The Lord

John 21:12-13



By the Shore by Yongsung Kim

Jesus said to them,
"Come and eat breakfast."

Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?"----knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

It is not surprising that under these circumstances seven of them with one consent, under the lead of Peter, determined to reengage in the fishing business. This was the one business in which they had experience, and that only three years before. They fished with nets, and the habit seems to have been to do the fishing at night. This was the very occasion Jesus was waiting for. He wished the disciples to reach the extremity of thinking and reasoning on the matter of his resurrection, and what they

should now do, in order that they might be prepared to receive definitely and profitably the instructions he had to give respecting their future course. The reactionary tendency to turn from preaching to the fishing business would be sure to come; and he considered it expedient that it should come while he was with them, that they might be profited to the utmost in respect to it. Now that they had reembarked in the fishing business the time had come for our Lord to demonstrate to them two things:

1 That he had a mission for them to perform in connection with the fishing for men which they had not yet accomplished, and which his death and resurrection would not interfere with, but rather stimulate and make really effective.

2 It would enable him to demonstrate in a most practical manner that the divine power by which he had hitherto provided for their necessities, and had at times fed multitudes, was still his, and would be continually exercised in their interest if they would continue to obey him.

When the disciples got to shore with their netful of fish they found, not only Jesus, but a fire and fish thereon already cooked. Here they had the lesson that under the Lord's care and supervision they could either be successful or unsuccessful in the fish business, and that he had the power, not only to give them fish in the ordinary way, but to provide cooked fish by miraculous power if it better served his purpose so to do.

They breakfasted with Jesus, for they knew him—not by any marks of nails, but by the miracle which he had performed. The stranger had not the clothing by which they had known their Lord, neither did He have the marks of the nails in His hands and feet, that they might thus identify Him. This was a different manifestation. They knew Him as did those with whom He walked to Emmaus, who recognized Him in the blessing of the bread, and not by His features or clothing or wounds. They recognized that none other than He could have performed such a miracle.

We read rather peculiarly, "None of them durst ask him, knowing it was the Lord;" they were so sure that it was he that they could not think of even seeming to question the fact by inquiry. The conversation while they breakfasted is not recorded, the Evangelist coming directly to the important words by our Lord addressed to Peter, the senior and leader of this new fish-business partnership. He addressed Peter, not as he had been accustomed, by his new name, Peter, but by his old name, Simon, possibly as an intimation to Peter that he had not manifested in the last few days the rock-like qualities implied in his surname, and was now inclined to leave the work for the Church for secular business. And the inquiry was most pointed, "Lovest thou me more than these?" —boats, nets, fishing tackle, etc.? You started out to be my disciple, and now I ask the question, In which place is your heart—with me in the service of the Kingdom, or in the fish business? R. 2806 and R. 5052

Three Times Assured

John 21:15-17

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,
"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?"

He said to Him,
"Yes, Lord. You know that I love You."

He said to him,
"Feed My lambs."

He said to him again a second time,
"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?"

He said to Him,
"Yes, Lord. You know that I love You."

He said to him,
"Tend My sheep."



Peter with Jesus

He said to him the third time,
"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?"

Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him,
"Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You."

Jesus said to him,
"Feed My sheep."

The stranger addressed St. Peter particularly, saying, "Lovest thou Me more than these" —these boats and nets, etc., pertaining to the fishing business? St. Peter answered, "Lord, Thou knowest that I affectionately love Thee." He used a word expressing fondness of love. Jesus replied, "Feed My lambs."

Then came the question a second time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" A great pressure was felt by St. Peter. Why did the Master so particularly question his love? Why should He put this question more to him than to the others? Was it because he had been the first of the disciples to suggest the resumption of the fishing business?

Was he to blame for this? But he answered, "Lord, Thou knowest that I affectionately love Thee." Jesus this time replied, "Tend My sheep." For the third time Jesus said to St. Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, **dost thou** affectionately love Me?" Here Jesus used the same word that St. Peter had used, as though He questioned the affection and depth of St. Peter's love. Ah! the third time must have sent the memory of St. Peter back to the scene in Caiaphas' Judgment Hall, when he denied his Master the third time, even with cursing. And now Jesus for the third time had asked him respecting his love and whether it was really a love of affection! St. Peter's choking reply was, "Lord, Thou knowest all things! Thou **knowest** that I affectionately love Thee!" The Lord's reply was, "Feed My sheep."

In harmony with these words of the Master to St. Peter the chief work of His followers has been to minister to the needs of the spirit-begotten **sheep**. It is in full harmony with this that St. Paul, addressing the Elders of Ephesus, counseled that they "feed the **flock of God**, which He had purchased with the blood of His own Son." There is a point here that perhaps is too frequently overlooked. If all of the Lord's followers could realize that the message to St. Peter is the same as comes to all of us, perhaps it would make a change in most of our preaching.

Have not Christians in general overlooked this important lesson, namely, that the chief work of the ministers and under-shepherds of the Lord's flock during this Age is to "**feed the flock**"? Is it not true that comparatively **little** feeding is being done? On the contrary, the thought usually received by new converts is, Now you are saved; go, evangelize, and bring others to Christ—especially bring money, for with plenty of it we can convert the world. Work for Jesus by soliciting funds for church expenses, extension, etc., etc.

If the inquirer has thoughts or feelings is it not too often the case that his instructors know not how to answer them, but merely say, "Stop thinking, and go to work"? Alas, that this is so true! The "**lambs**" should be **fed** until they become "**sheep**." The **sheep** should be **tended**, cared for, guided, instructed, and the sheep should also be **fed** with the stronger meat than that which the lambs could appropriate. St. Paul gives this thought when on one occasion he urges his hearers to desire "the sincere milk of the Word that they may grow thereby."

But few seem to copy the great St. Paul in respect to their methods. Few seem to realize and apply to themselves the Master's words to St. Peter, "Feed **My lambs**," and "**My sheep**." As a consequence, the Church of Christ is in a languishing condition. Many, sincere at heart, know not what they believe. Many would find it impossible to follow St. Peter's admonition,

Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.
1 Peter 3:15

Yes, Peter was ready, and so were all those dear disciples, again to forsake all and take up the cause of their crucified and risen Lord, and boldly and openly to

proclaim the coming Kingdom and glory of him whom the Jews had taken and, with wicked hands, had crucified and slain. Only the doubt which seemed to be implied in the third repetition of the question grieved Peter. His was an ardent, warm nature, and he wanted the Lord to be fully persuaded of his love and zeal. It grieved him, therefore, to feel that possibly yet there was a shadow of doubt, a little cloud, between him and the Lord which his repentance had not fully removed. But the Lord quickly removed the cloud and enabled him to realize his full reinstatement as an accepted and beloved disciple, in full fellowship and cooperation with himself.

> **Thrice had Peter denied the Lord---though under extreme temptation---and the denial was sincerely repented of with bitter tears; and now thrice would the Lord have him reaffirm his devotion to him, and receive three additional assurances of his ample reinstatement in his love and favor. R. 1823**

The question thus addressed to Peter--- "Lovest thou me more than these?" is the question addressed to every consecrated follower of the Lord, without a single exception. If we have given ourselves unreservedly to the Lord, the necessities of his work are before us, to prove the sincerity and strength of our love. Nor has the reproach of the cross yet ceased: indeed, in this end of the age, as in the beginning, the reproach of the cross is bitter and determined. So to each of us comes the testing question, "Lovest thou me **more than these**" ---more than the business pursuits and prospects, more than the social ties and pleasures, more than ease, or comfort, or friends, or fame, or wealth, or a good name, or any earthly good?

Ah! it is truly a test question, and a question which no one can sincerely answer in the affirmative who has not the inspiring incentive of love in the heart. But pure, fervent love to Christ does quicken zeal, and enable those who have it to respond gladly and promptly,

> ***Lord, thou knowest all things---thou knowest that I love thee,***

and sends them forth with joy to prove their love by their works. "If any man love me, let him take up his cross daily, and follow me."

And how shall we know, how shall we test our own hearts as to the degree of our love for the Lord? How will the Lord test us if not by permitting trials and difficulties, oppositions, etc., to overtake us? As our Lord hid himself from the apostles for three weeks or more, yet was near them watching over them and ready to take advantage of the most favorable moment to impart the necessary lessons, so we may be sure that he watches over our interests to give us needed instruction and guidance---and if sometimes he hides his face behind a frowning providence it is with a view to our blessing or strengthening, to prepare us to appropriate some valuable lessons which will be helpful to us in our preparation for a place in the throne. Let us, then, rejoice even in tribulation, knowing what it is working out, and in such tribulation let us ask ourselves the question, How am I showing my Lord that I love him supremely? R. 4184

So far as the record shows these questions respecting his present love were the only reproof our Lord gave Peter on account of his temporary deflection and denial of his cause; and here we have a lesson which many of the Lord's people will do well to lay closely to heart. Many feel as though they must exact from a brother or a sister a very decided apology for any act of discourtesy, even though much less important than Peter's misdeed. Let us learn well this lesson of reproving others very gently, very considerately, kindly, by a hint rather than by a direct charge and detail of the wrong---by an enquiry respecting the **present** condition of their hearts, rather than respecting a **former** condition, in which we know that they have erred. We are to be less careful for the punishments that will follow wrongdoings than for the recovery of the erring one out of the error of his way. We are not to attempt to judge and to punish one another for misdeeds, but rather to remember that all this is in the hands of the Lord.

As for Peter and his denial of the Lord, and as to the offences which may come to us through brethren, we may know that under divine providence some corrective penalty or discipline, direct or indirect, always follows; but we are not to attempt to inflict those penalties, nor to impress a condemnation, upon those who are in error and who realize their error, but rather to sympathize with them wisely, by helping them to learn the good lessons.

While the Lord's words were addressed specially to Peter, as the leader of the group, undoubtedly the instructions were meant also for all of the "eleven," for the apostles were all bishops, all caretakers of the Lord's flock. And the same message is applicable, though not in the same degree, to all ministers of the truth today; whoever, by the grace of God, is placed in a position of opportunity to feed the Lord's flock should consider it one of the highest privileges of life, and should gladly lay aside every weight and hindrance, that he might thoroughly enjoy and perform this service. Thus the Apostle said to the elders at Ephesus,

Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
Acts 20:28

As our Lord said to Peter upon the profession of his love that he might feed the lambs and tend and feed the sheep, so he says to all who are his followers. Not that we can have the honorable place of apostles in connection with the Lord's dear flock, but that each of us may find opportunities for tending and assisting, feeding, nourishing the flock of God. R. 4184

R. 5052, R. 1823, R. 4184, R. 2808

What Is That to You?

John 21:18-22

"Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."

This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him,
"Follow Me."

Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, (who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?")

Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus,
"But Lord, what about this man?"

Jesus said to him,
"If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?
You follow Me."

Following the questioning, our Lord, still addressing the Apostle Peter, made a prophecy respecting him that he would live to be an old man, and that then he would be deprived of his liberties. This was not a very bright prospect to hold out before Peter; it meant a further testing of his loyalty. The Lord gave a prophecy indicating that he would indeed be faithful to the last; and implying that he would be a martyr by crucifixion, his hands being extended. And tradition tells us that Peter was faithful even unto death, and that being ordered to be put to death by crucifixion by Nero, at his own request he was executed head downward, as being unworthy, according to his own statement, to be crucified as was his Lord.

The prophecy proved to Peter and to the other apostles present, that in the work in which they were to engage afresh they were not to expect Kingdom honors and blessings, but rather to remember the Lord's previous declaration that the servant is not above his Master, and that as men despitefully used the Master the servants must expect nothing better. How nobly those chosen ones came up to the various tests and requirements placed upon them! There is a lesson for us, too, along the same lines, namely, that faithfulness to our Master will probably bring us tribulation of one kind or another. Hence we are not to seek our own wills or our own ways, but rather to look for and accept the Lord's providential guidance of our interests and to prefer this, knowing that he is able always to make all

things work together for our good as New Creatures. John tells us that our Lord's words were understood to signify that Peter would die a violent death, and that in conclusion Jesus said, "Follow me," note my example and copy it.

Peter evidently felt that the conversation was pivoted largely upon himself and sought to turn it a little, saying respecting John, whom he recognized as the Lord's favorite disciple, "Lord, what shall this man do?" What is your prediction and what will be your providence in respect to John? Our Lord's reply was almost curt; it amounted to, Mind your own business and you will have plenty to do, though it was stated in a more polite form. Jesus said, "If I will that he tarry until I come,

What is that to thee? Follow thou me.

This is a difficult lesson for all of the Lord's followers to learn, but a very important one. If we allow ourselves to look about us and to wonder why some fellow-disciple is not receiving apparently the same amount of chastisement or trials or difficulties or burdens that the Lord permits to come to us, and if then we permit ourselves to become judges of the Lord and his wisdom and his providences, the result will be disastrous to ourselves. It will destroy our peace and undermine our faith and hinder us from learning the lessons necessary to prepare us for the Kingdom. If such criticisms of divine providence at any time come to our minds, we should answer ourselves, promptly, in the language of our Lord to Peter, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." You are not competent to regulate these matters, nor is it proper nor necessary for the Master to explain to you all of his plans and purposes. It is far better for you that you learn faith, submission and trust. No two of us have the same natural disposition, no two of us, therefore, need the same disciplinary training at the hand of the Lord. We have confidence in his wisdom and love; let us manifest it, realizing that if our trials are greater our blessings will be proportionate, and as the Lord said to Paul, so he would say to each of us, "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9.) With the Apostle let us say, If, therefore, the Lord's grace is proportionate to our trials let us receive with rejoicing all the trials he may send that we may have the more of his grace! It is for each sheep to know the Shepherd and to follow him, taking as straight paths for his feet as possible, and leaving with the Shepherd the general oversight of the flock and its interests, giving attention in proportion as the Lord through the brethren gives opportunity to assist in the shepherding work and in the name of the Lord to counsel or assist his dear flock.
R. 4184 and R. 2808

What Is That to You?

John 21:22

You follow Me.
Do not look to the left or right,
and do not look around. Look up at the One who knows you.
Fix your eyes on Me.

You follow Me.
Do not compare yourself to your brother,
His tribulations or his trials or his sufferings.
Compare yourself to Me.

You follow Me.
What is that to you, that your friend---
You perceive---prospers beyond what you have ever known?
Trust fully in Me.

You follow Me.
I know what *you* need, different from
Your sister---experiences and lessons so you will
Learn to walk with Me.

You follow Me.
What is that to you if they have more?
I am the vine, and you---and they---are branches abiding,
Rest completely in me.

You follow Me.
You will be misrepresented
and misunderstood, but do not be discouraged.
Lean heavily on me.

You follow Me.
I know you infinitely well
And what *you* need to overcome and gain the Victory.
Have faith in Me.

You follow Me.
Take My Yoke upon you and go
Where I lead---by still waters and pastures green so you will
Rely on Me.

Take up your cross and follow Me.
I love you more than anyone
on Earth loves you—more than parents, children, spouse or friend,
Come, lay your life down for Me.

--T. A. Blackwell

Galilee to Mount Olivet

Acts 1:4-5,8

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me."

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth, for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

It was that, after five or six appearances in the vicinity of Jerusalem, our Lord abstained from further appearing to his followers, and they returned to their home country, Galilee, where he met them, as he had engaged to do. We must remember that most of our Lord's ministry was spent in Galilee and that the majority of the believers were Galileans. It was to be expected that all of the household of faith should have some opportunity for witnessing to our Lord's resurrection, and so the Apostle Paul tells us that in one of these later manifestations in Galilee, "Our Lord was seen by above five hundred brethren at one time; of whom the greater part remain unto this present [the time the Apostle was writing], though some are fallen asleep." —1 Cor. 15:6.

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying,
"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."
Matthew 28:16-18

When our Lord appeared his message was the very one they needed to have impressed, and which he had been to some extent impressing at his previous appearances. It was that all **power** in heaven and in earth had been given unto him. Following the assurance of his authority as the Messiah, our Lord, addressing especially the eleven apostles, but indirectly, with and through them, addressing all his followers, gave them and us the great commission under which we, his people, have since been operating. It might be termed the **ordination** of his apostles and all his followers as preachers, ambassadors, members of the royal priesthood, speaking and teaching in the name of the Master, the fully empowered Messiah. The commission divides itself into three parts:

1 *Make disciples of all nations*
2 *baptizing them*
3 *teaching them*

Apparently all of the apostles [then] and perhaps others returned to Jerusalem and to the Mount of Olives, their instruction being to tarry at Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high.

The holy Spirit had been promised and must be waited for as the realization and beginning of the new work, the development of the Christian Church. This was pictured to them as a baptism and immersion with the holy Spirit, and contrasted with John's baptism or immersion in water. This baptism of the holy Spirit would represent to them the fact that he died for human sin, had been received into the Father's presence and had offered of his merit on behalf of those who believed in him and accepted him. It would constitute the sign, evidently, or mark, not only that their sins were forgiven, but that their consecration had been accepted, and that they were now adopted into God's family, begotten of him as spiritual sons, who, if they would develop in harmony with their covenant, in the School of Christ, would, in due time, be born of the spirit in the resurrection to the divine nature.

The word here rendered **witnesses** is in the Greek, **martyres**, from which comes our English word **martyr**, signifying those who witness at a cost of suffering or death. It may have seemed strange to the apostles that the telling of the good tidings would cost them suffering, and it may seem still more strange to us today that the proclamation of the true Gospel of Christ should bring persecution and call for martyrdom. But it is true, and the Master explained the reason, saying, "The darkness hateth the light." The world in general, including Christendom, is more or less under the Adversary's delusions, and whoever is faithful in telling the message of the Lord in its length and breadth will speedily find opposition where least he might have expected it. The goodness of God, his love, and the length and breadth and height and depth of his Plan of Salvation are so foreign to the benighted mind that it induces persecution, because the Truth is stranger than the fiction. A lesson here for us is that this witnessing is not yet finished, and that to meet our Lord's approval as his representatives we must be martyrs to one degree or another. The more faithful we are, probably the more we shall have opportunity for suffering and correspondingly will be our share in the eternal weight of glory, which God has in reservation for those that thus love him and serve him.
R. 2809, R. 3376, R. 4305

> **Our Lord wished the apostles to distinctly understand that they were not then in the condition to undertake the new work, and that the proper time for action had not yet come---that they would not be prepared until they should receive the holy spirit, a power and unction from the Father, which would specially qualify, enable and guide them in the important service of their commission. Moreover, it would be to them, and to all believers through them, a divine evidence or attestation. R. 2924**

Times and Seasons

Acts 1:6-7

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

And He said to them,
"It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority."

Slowly, during the forty days, the disciples were learning to expect very different things from what they had in mind at the beginning and throughout the Lord's ministry: they were learning that the Kingdom glories and honors were not to be distributed immediately; but that a new dispensation, and a new kind of work in harmony with it, was set before them to be done; and gradually their minds reverted to the prophecies in which the blessings of the Lord upon the nation of Israel are set forth, and the intimation given that the blessings upon the whole world are to flow through the children of Abraham in some national capacity. They had confidence in these prophecies, and now they would ask the Lord respecting them. How could these prophecies be fulfilled under the new arrangement, which seemed to ignore the nation and to merely use themselves, the Lord's followers, a mere fragment of the nation. Hence their inquiry of the Master whether now or soon or when the prophecies would be fulfilled, which promised the restoration of Israel to divine favor as God's Kingdom, thus implying its release from the power of Rome and all other dominions.

The disciples understood well enough that the restoration of Israel to a place of influence and power as a nation would be an incident of our Lord's great triumph in taking the dominion of earth, but they did not fully comprehend, for this Gospel Age, has been, as it were, a parenthesis, in which the Bride Class has been in course of selection from amongst all mankind. R. 4305

Our Lord's answer was not to the effect that they had misunderstood these prophecies, and that they would all have some kind of spiritual fulfillment; on the contrary, by his answer he implied that their conception of the prophecies was quite proper, but that the time for their fulfillment had not yet come, and that they must not press the question as to the times and seasons; they must trust to God, who has these in his own keeping, and who will abundantly fulfill every promise he had ever made in its due time.

While the due time had not come for the apostles to understand the particulars of the restitution of Israel, etc., other knowledge and other work were awaiting, as soon as the Father marked them by the outpouring of the holy Spirit. It was not due time then to discuss matters that were a long way in advance. The thing immediately in hand was their work of witnessing for Jesus, of telling out all that they knew about him, that others might know and be blessed through their ministries. In due time they would not be confined to Jerusalem and Judea, but might go to Samaria, yea, and to the uttermost parts of the earth; for eventually the message would be for every creature. R. 2818 and R. 4305

The Ascension

Acts 1:9-12

Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said,
"Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.

How strange that so many of the Lord's people, even amongst those who fully believe in, and with deep interest long for his second coming, should overlook the particular features of this angelic testimony! First, that it was the **same** Jesus that should come again—not the former Jesus, whom they knew in the flesh, but the same Jesus, who was taken up from them, and whom they recognized as so thoroughly "changed" from the time of his resurrection—the spirit Jesus, "a quickening spirit." This is the one promised to come again, not in weakness, as "in the days of his **flesh**," but a spirit being, clothed with full plenitude of divine power to establish them as his Kingdom, and through them to bless all the families of the earth.

While speaking our Lord began to ascend and soon a cloud had enveloped and hid him from their sight. They waited, looking as though expecting him to descend again, but instead two angels appeared and said, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is received up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11.)

The statement is not that they would see him coming as they saw him go, for surely they did not. They died. And not until after he had come again could their awakening, their resurrection, take place. Nor did the angels say that any one would see him coming. They merely declared a great fact, that he would so come, and that his coming would be in like manner to his going. Noting this carefully we ask ourselves, What will be the manner of his second coming? The answer is that as his departure was

quiet,
secret,
unknown to the world,
known only to his most intimate and dear followers,

so his second coming will be in like manner—not with shouts and voices and trumpets, but secretly, quietly,

As a thief in the night.

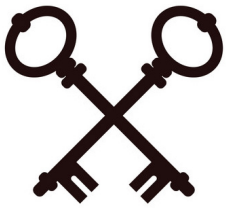
R. 2818 and R. 4305

The Keys of The Kingdom



Saint Peter, art c. 1616/1618

4



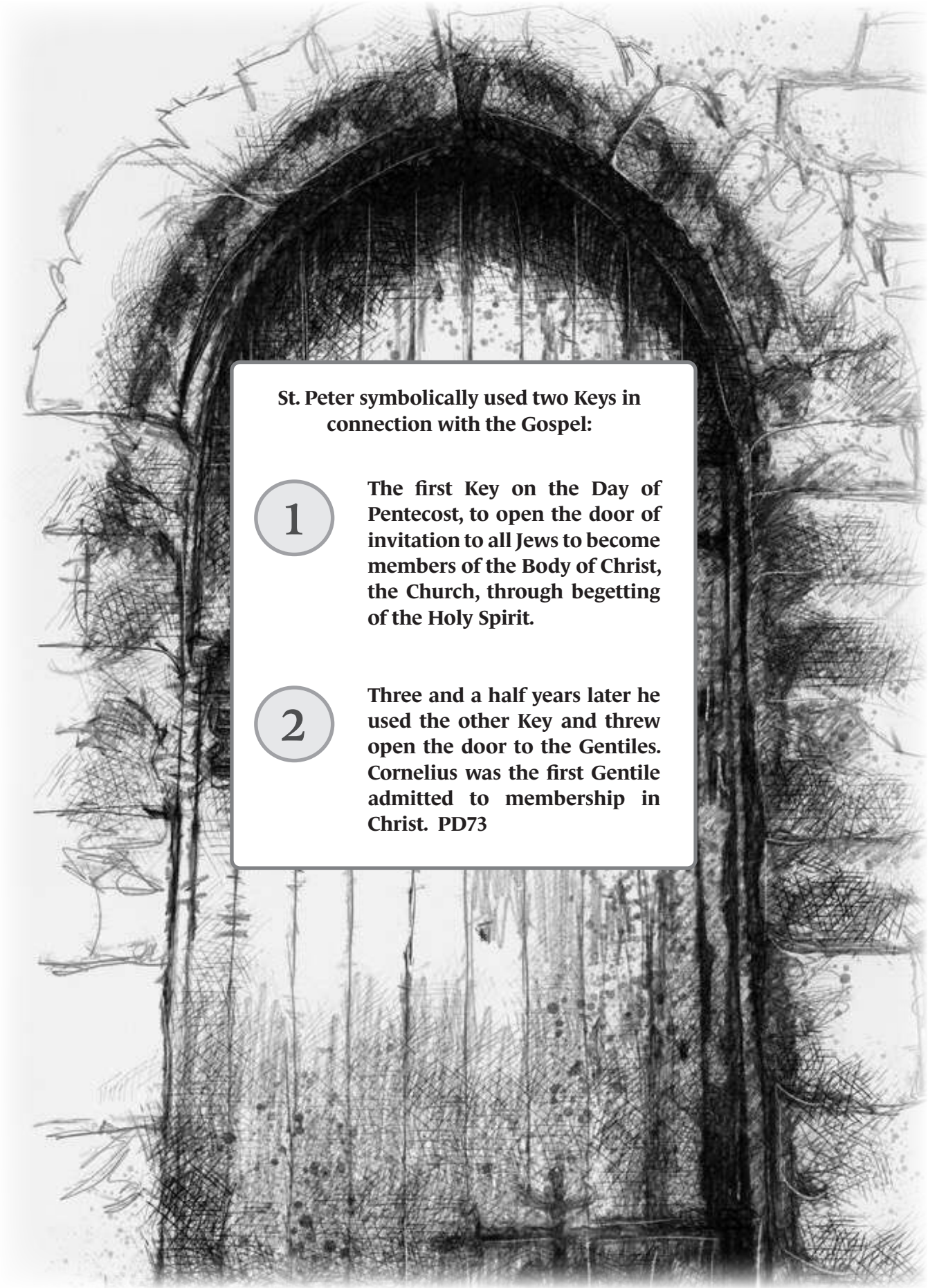
A key implies a lock, and the thought here is that God's Kingdom was locked that none could enter it. Our Lord alone was able to keep the divine Law and to inherit the divine promise. To him alone, therefore, belonged entrance to the Kingdom. He was recognized as the Anointed from the time he received the holy Spirit at his baptism, and in the fullest sense in his resurrection from the dead, a spirit being. "With all power in heaven and in earth." —Matt. 28:18.

But neither before his death nor during the forty days after his resurrection could our Savior open, unlock the Kingdom to his followers, though he promised them ultimately a share with him therein. He put his Spirit upon them, by which they in his name performed many wonderful works, but they could not be recognized by the Father nor receive the begetting power of the holy Spirit, the anointing of the Father, at that time. They could not then be ushered into the Kingdom privileges and relationship until Christ had ascended up on high and appeared in the presence of the Father on their behalf, presenting the merit of his own sacrifice as the condition upon which they might be accepted. It was after our Lord had done this that he permitted Peter to use the first key—to throw open the door of the Kingdom to all of his truly consecrated followers.

The door thrown open at Pentecost was only to the Jews, not to the Gentiles. Peter preached only to the Jews and proselytes, inviting them and them only to become sharers in the Kingdom of God's dear Son. When, three and a half years later, the Lord's due time had come for throwing open the other door into the Kingdom—the door for the Gentiles— Peter again was given the key, the right, the authority, to open that door. He it was who was sent to Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, to explain to him the conditions of relationship to Christ in the Kingdom and to initiate him that he might receive the holy Spirit. The two keys having been used there is nothing further to unlock respecting the Kingdom, and the Jewish institutions having passed away there is now but the one door, and it, we are told, will be closed perpetually when all of the wise virgins shall have gone in to the wedding. —Matt. 25:1-10. R. 3789

While they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding, and the door was shut.
Matthew 25:10

• *See also p. 37*

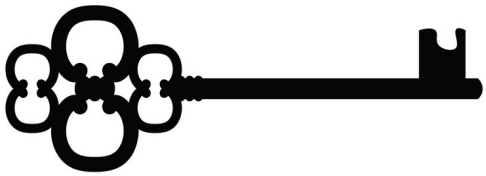


St. Peter symbolically used two Keys in connection with the Gospel:

1. **The first Key on the Day of Pentecost, to open the door of invitation to all Jews to become members of the Body of Christ, the Church, through begetting of the Holy Spirit.**

2. **Three and a half years later he used the other Key and threw open the door to the Gentiles. Cornelius was the first Gentile admitted to membership in Christ. PD73**

The First Key



On the Day of Pentecost, when the holy Spirit was poured out, we read that "Peter stood up with the eleven" —-he took the initiative; he *opened*, the others followed, and the gospel invitation was thus thrown open to the Jews. F221

Waiting for The Holy Spirit

Acts 1:12-14

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Waiting for the power from on high, the eleven apostles (and with them apparently a considerable number of believers---possibly 120---(Acts 1:15) were "with one accord in one place;" they may have been expecting the blessing during the preceding nine days of their assembling, but Pentecost being a specially holy day it may have appeared to them as probable that it would bring the consummation of their hopes, and with one accord or agreement the full number were all present at the time.

There is a thought here respecting the propriety of the Lord's people being at one, or in accord, in respect to the things they are seeking for and waiting for. It is to this end that the Lord has exhorted us, through the Apostle, that we forget not the assembling of ourselves together, and so much the more as we see the day drawing near---not the day of Pentecost, but a still greater and still grander day: Pentecost brought merely the first fruits of the spirit, while the day we wait for is the day of the consummation of all our hopes and of all God's promises in respect to the Church, as the Bride and joint-heir of his Son.

We cannot all come together in the literal sense, as did the apostles and the early Church on Pentecost, but we can come together into one place in another sense; we can come into the holy place, into the sanctuary or consecrated condition of heart and of life, and thus into oneness and fellowship with the Lord, and with all who are in the same holy condition, and partakers of the same blessing of the inner light of the golden candlestick, and the inner food of the table of shew-bread, and the inner communion with the Lord, represented in the golden altar and its incense. Our natural dispositions are various and their crooks and twists different; but our new natures are one, begotten of the same Father, through the same spirit. We are to seek accord as new creatures, and are to restrain, mortify and cast out the weaknesses of the flesh and the contentiousness of disposition which may be ours, accordingly---that as new creatures we may be one with the Lord and with all who are his body or Church, under the one Head or Lord, infused or energized by one spirit of obedience to the one Father, and under the control of the one law of Love.

The disciples apparently abode together in Jerusalem, where they were all comparative strangers, their home being in Galilee. Our Lord's mother, and others of the faithful sisters, were of the company, who, in harmony with the Lord's promise,

> waited at Jerusalem for power from on high. Doubtless those days of waiting were not only essential to the going of our Lord into the Father's presence and the presentation before him of the merits of the ransom sacrifice, and the application of these for the benefit of mankind, but the time was necessary also for the development of the apostles---in faith and trust, through the influence of the promises the Lord had left them. It required some time for them to consider and to reason over the wonderful things they had heard from the Master's lips, and thus to get their hearts into the condition where they would be best prepared for the blessings they were expecting.
>
> Jesus would impress his disciples with the importance of the blessing for which they were to wait, and with the fact that it meant to them a new era, a new dispensation: as they knew of the reformation movement instituted by John the Baptizer, and that the repentant sinners were immersed in water, he would have them know that now he was instituting a Church on a much higher plane, and that all who would be received into it would be immersed in holy spirit, holy power---come under an influence of power from on high. His declaration that this would be not many days hence, was indefinite purposely; first, that they should expect it soon, and not be disheartened or discouraged, and yet he left the exact number of days unstated, so that they might be continually watching for it. This left the apostles in a waiting attitude, and, as Luke informs us, in an attitude of prayer and expectancy, very profitable to them at this juncture. R. 2926 and R. 2818

To many the ten days of tarrying would be considered a serious waste of valuable time. Think of it! One hundred and twenty of the Lord's consecrated people idle for ten days ---not preaching, nor healing, nor engaging in any special religious work---neglecting business and money-making, and all earthly interests as well. What were they doing? The record implies that their special employment during those ten days was prayer and supplication to God. They knew not what qualifications they needed for their future service. They were merely trusting all to their Lord and obediently waiting for the promised blessing and preparation.

The necessity for their tarrying was threefold:

- **They were incompetent for the work designed for them, until empowered for it.**

- **They could not receive the blessed anointing until first the Redeemer had ascended into heaven, "There to appear in the presence of God on our behalf," on behalf of believers.**

- **These ten days of prayer were necessary also to fit and prepare the Lord's disciples for the reception of the holy Spirit.** Our hearts need to be emptied of their earthly hopes, aims and ambitions in order to make place for the new riches of God's grace. The ten days were probably none too long for the testing of the faith and loving obedience and zeal for the Lord and his cause, which they had undertaken to serve. As they prayed and fasted and waited expectantly for the promised blessing from on high, doubtless worldly ambitions, hopes and aims dissolved and vanished from their hearts, leaving them ready for the blessing the Lord intended, and which he poured out. R. 4306

Peter Intervenes

Acts 1:15-17,20

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said,

"Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus, for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry."

"For it is written in the Book of Psalms:
'LET HIS DWELLING PLACE BE DESOLATE, AND LET NO ONE LIVE IN IT,'
and,
'LET ANOTHER TAKE HIS OFFICE.' "

After our Lord's resurrection and ascension, the little company of a hundred and twenty disciples, according to the Master's command, were together awaiting the descent of power from on high—the Holy Spirit. While waiting they very properly spent the time in prayer and in searching of the Scriptures, and while thus engaged (Acts 1:13-26) Peter found that passage in David's prophecy which mentions the appointment of another to the office of Judas the betrayer of our Lord; and Peter called the attention of the company to it.

By the loss of Judas a vacancy had occurred in the company of the apostles, which vacancy the apostles themselves endeavored to fill by their election of Matthias. (Acts 1:26.) This they had no authority to do, but, presuming such to be the Lord's will, they chose two and asked the Lord to indicate which of the two whom they had selected would be his choice; and when the lot fell upon Matthias—for it must of course fall on one of the two—the eleven accepted him as the Lord's choice for the place of Judas.

And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.
Acts 1:23-26

The sequel showed that the Lord merely ignored their presumption in the matter, and in his own time and way chose Saul of Tarsus, a man at heart devoted to the service of God and needing only to be enlightened by the truth when all his consecrated powers would be fully enlisted in the blessed work of bearing the name

of Christ to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. And this Saul, afterward called Paul, was the most noted, self-sacrificing and efficient of all the apostles.

Many were the Redeemer's followers at times, both men and women, but only The Twelve were specially deputized as His mouthpieces and representatives among men. Some of the things said to and respecting them are equally appropriate to every one of Jesus' followers, but other things said to The Twelve and respecting them apply to none others of their day or since—for instance, the Savior said to The Twelve, and to none others,

Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matt. 16:19; 18:18.)

The import of these words clearly is that the persons indicated were assured that they would be so specially guided of Divine providence in all their efforts that they would set forth as the Divine will amongst men nothing to which Heaven would not assent. And, on the other hand, they would declare not binding upon the followers of Jesus only such things as in God's sight would not be binding. In those twelve men, therefore, we recognize a plenary inspiration, or special guidance not accorded in this particular degree to others of the "brethren."

We do not forget that Judas was one of the original Twelve and that, proving traitorous, "He went to his own place." We remember also that he was specifically referred to by the Prophet David, through whom the Divine message came, that another would take the Apostleship which Judas forfeited. What we do claim is this: that the announcement was prophetically made of a successor to Judas, so as to teach us that the appointment of his successor was exceptional and not the rule; that aside from this one case there would be no successors.

Surely there is no intimation in the New Testament that as one after another of the Apostles died other men were recognized as succeeding them. On the contrary, the Scriptures repeatedly refer to the "Twelve Apostles of the Lamb." Moreover, as the Jewish Dispensation began at the death of Jacob, in the recognition of his twelve sons, so the Christian Dispensation began at the death of Jesus, in the recognition of His twelve Apostles. And as one of the tribes of Israel was cut off, and is not mentioned in the enumeration in the Apocalypse, but the tribe of Manasseh substituted, so amongst Jesus' Apostles Judas is dropped and a successor is appointed.
R. 549, R. 1444, R. 5002

Twelve Apostles of The Lamb Revelation 21:14

Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Peter and the other apostles are presented to us as foundation stones built upon the great truth, that Christ is the Redeemer, the Savior, the Messiah. Note how our Lord presents this matter in Revelation, in the picture of the New Jerusalem, representing its walls as having twelve foundations of precious stones, in which were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. —Rev. 21:14.

The more clearly the Lord's people discern the fact that these twelve men were made the peculiar representatives of the new dispensation and their words the special channels of truth in respect to the New Creation, the more thoroughly they will be prepared to accept their words, and the more disinclined they will be to indorse the teachings of others in conflict with their testimony.

The last proposition of our Lord's promise [to the apostles] reads, "He [the Father's holy Spirit] shall show you things to come."

When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will tell you things to come.
John 16:13

This verse implies a special inspiration of the apostles, and indirectly it implies the blessing and enlightenment of the Lord's people down to the very close of this age, through their teachings. They were thus not only to be holy apostles, but also prophets, or seers making known future events to the Church.

The early Church rightly reverenced the piety and the superior spiritual knowledge and wisdom of the apostles, and, regarding them, as they really were, as the Lord's specially chosen ambassadors to them, they sat at their feet as learners; yet not with blank, unquestioning minds, but with a disposition to try the spirits and to prove the testimony. (1 John 4:1; 1 Thess. 5:21; Isa. 8:20) And the apostles, in teaching them, enjoined this attitude of mind, which required a reason for their hope, and encouraged it, and were prepared to meet it—not with enticing words of man's wisdom (of human philosophy and theory), but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that the faith of the Church might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. (1 Cor. 2:4,5) They did not cultivate a blind and superstitious reverence for themselves.

God did most wonderfully use the twelve apostles, making them very able ministers of his truth, and guiding them supernaturally in the subjects upon which they wrote —so that nothing profitable to the man of God has been omitted—and, in the very words of their original writings, manifested a care and wisdom beyond what even the apostles themselves comprehended. Praise God for this sure foundation for our faith! R. 3789, F221, F222, F232, F229 • *See also p. 14-15*

The Day of Pentecost

Acts 2:1-8

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.

Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?"

Pentecost was a notable day in the Jewish calendar. It marked the fiftieth day in the harvest---after the gathering of the first ripe sheaf. Our Lord in His glorious resurrected condition was the Antitype of that sheaf, the First-fruit of God in the great Plan of Redemption. The first forty days, as we have seen, were used in giving occasional lessons to the disciples---helping them over the difficulties of their position, getting them properly started, with proper faith in the resurrection, to make a good witness and to gather out the Lord's jewels from amongst men. But when Jesus left them at the end of the forty days, He instructed them not to begin their ministry at once, but to wait until they would be endued with power from on High---by the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, they waited ten days, and then their waiting was rewarded by the outpouring of His Spirit upon them in the upper room on the fiftieth day, Pentecost.

We are not to understand that a mighty wind blew upon the praying and waiting company on Pentecost Day, but there was merely a sound which resembled that of a mighty wind. It was the more miraculous that there was no wind. From the reading of the Greek it is inferable that the tongues of fire or blaze of light which appeared over the head of each were not split or cloven flames, but that the expression, "Cloven tongues of fire," implies that a larger flame was first manifest, which was cloven or split or divided into these smaller flames, which appeared over the head of each. But no matter what the particular form of manifestation, its object was quickly discerned. It was the promised blessing from on high, from the Father's throne, through the Son; as St. Peter explained,

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another.
1 Peter 4:10

The entire house was filled with a wonderful power, and every believer was apparently, as it were, electrified, vivified, and they were all filled with this holy Spirit, this hallowed influence.



The Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles by Gustave

The number of believers who were together in the upper room at the time of the outpouring of the holy spirit was about one hundred and twenty. They were all immersed in the holy spirit, because the holy spirit filled the house. But whether or not the tongues of light rested upon any others than the apostles we cannot surely know. It may have rested upon them only, by way of distinguishing them as mouthpieces of the holy spirit. Certain it is that in the subsequent preaching with various tongues there seems good reason for supposing that the apostles only preached; because it was said of the speakers, "Are not all these which speak Galileans?" We cannot suppose that the entire company of one hundred and twenty were all Galileans. It is quite probable, indeed, that the majority of them were Judeans; but the eleven apostles were all from Galilee, and hence it is probable that they alone did the preaching; and probably also that they alone had the manifestations of the tongues of light in the upper room.

I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever---the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him, but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.*
John 14:16-17

This text represents the matter in clear light and in harmony with all the other Scriptures on the subject when it declares that the holy Spirit must come from the Father, not from the Son; when it declares that the Son would petition the Father to send the Spirit; when it declares that this special power or spirit of the Father would be another Comforter, instead of our Lord Jesus himself, whose going away was necessary and expedient. Had our Lord remained as a person in the flesh, he would

*A glance at the Greek text of this passage shows that the translators were influenced by their prejudices on the subject, for there is no ground for the use of the words "whom" and "he." The *Diaglott* translation of verse 17 reads: "The Spirit of truth, ***which*** the world cannot receive, because it beholds ***it*** not, nor knows ***it***; but ye know ***it***; because ***it*** operates with you and will be in you." E170

have been hampered by the fleshly and earthly conditions, much as we are, because he could not be everywhere at once. It was preferable or expedient, therefore, that he should personally leave his disciples and appear before the Father as their Advocate, and thus secure to them the holy Spirit, which would not only represent the Father and himself, but would also represent all Truth, all righteousness, and be a channel for every one that needed blessing.

The tongues of light are a forceful illustration of the fact that God purposed to use human tongues as his agencies in promulgating his message and calling out his elect from the world. An energy of soul evidently went with the outward demonstration, giving a courage to the apostles of which previously, as humble and unlearned men, they were naturally deficient. Note, for instance, how it led Peter, who, fifty-three days before had denied the Lord, saying, "I know not the man," for fear of the Jews, to now courageously stand up in the midst of those very Jews, and to proclaim him as his Master, as the Son of God risen from the dead and ascended up on high; as the great Mediator and High Priest of the new order. It gave him the courage to charge home to the hearts of his hearers their responsibility for the crime. So also the other disciples, who previously had fled from their arrested Master, were now courageous to tell forth his praise. Not only had they become convinced, by the proofs received, respecting his resurrection and his ascension, but now these proofs were added to by the fulfillment of his promises, evidencing the fact that he had ascended to the Father, and that he had been favorably received, and that these gifts of the spirit were evidences of the return of divine favor toward them, —of their acceptance in the Beloved One, and of their right and authority to go forth in his name and to declare remission of sins to all the penitent who would come unto the Father through him.

At this particular season of the year the city of Jerusalem was crowded with visitors from various parts of the world. It was at seasons like the Passover and Pentecost that numbers of devout Jews, not only from all parts of Judea and Galilee, went to Jerusalem, but also the "dispersed" Jews of devout spirit from the surrounding countries came thither, to worship the Lord and to obey the command requiring all his faithful to assemble themselves before him at Jerusalem. Thus it was that at the time of these visits the city would sometimes have a crowded population of from two to three millions of people, chiefly adults. The city was crowded at the time of this Pentecostal blessing, and a great concourse of people was drawn together by the miraculous manifestation of divine power amongst the disciples.

Some of these, hearing the apostles speaking in various languages which they could not understand, passed on, declaring that they had no interest in the matter, and that probably the speakers were intoxicated, and did not know what they were saying themselves; but others recognized their own tongues and dialects, some apostles speaking in one tongue, some in another; and when they perceived that all of the speakers were Galileans, they

So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?" Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."
Acts 2:12-13

were astounded, especially in view of the fact that they were unlearned men. The miracle helped to impress the situation upon their minds, and we may be sure that the words spoken were also powerful.

The events of that day of Pentecost were very valuable to the Church at that time, but have been equally valuable to all of the Lord's members. The Scriptures represent that all who are received into God's family receive a begetting of the Holy Spirit; and this begetting was what Pentecost meant to those waiting ones in the upper room. From that time onward they were sons of God; and "if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ" their Lord. (Romans 8:17.) And so it is with us who have come into the Body of Christ since Pentecost. We do not receive special manifestations of Divine power, such as the cloven tongues that came upon those disciples; but we do receive from God the same Holy Spirit which they received. R. 5830, R. 4306, R. 2088, R. 2927

Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit

At Pentecost the Lord gave gifts to the Apostles, and to the remainder of the Church through them. These gifts were represented in the ability to speak with various tongues and in power to perform miracles—heal the sick, etc. Evidently these gifts were necessary for the establishment of the Church; but they must have all expired when the Apostles, through whom alone they were bestowed upon others, fell asleep in death. But while God has not continued the gifts with the Church, He has promised something still better; i.e., the fruits of the Spirit. The fruits are more valuable than the gifts, because they represent character and not merely powers. —1 Corinthians 12:31; 13.

The fruits of the Spirit are meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, love; and these evidence that the individual possessing them has become a member of the Church of Christ, and has been begotten of the Holy Spirit. Much therefore as we rejoice that the Apostles had the gifts and afterwards cultivated the fruits, we are glad that we now have the fruits of the Spirit.

One of the gifts of the Spirit was manifested by one of the Apostles immediately—the power of speaking with unknown tongues. They were all Galileans, and therefore used to only the one dialect. The testimony, however, is that under the Divine power of the Holy Spirit they spoke in various languages so that the people of the countries represented by those languages understood clearly and were astonished, saying, "Are not all these which speak Galileans, and how hear we every man in our own tongue?" —Acts 2:7, 8.

We are not to understand that the miracle was in the hearing, but in the speaking. The different Apostles speaking these different tongues were all heard by the people and appreciated by the people who used those tongues. It was a miracle, surely, and had the designed effect. Not merely was it a convincing power and experience for the Apostles themselves and for the other believers of that time, but it became a witness to the holy Jews who had gathered at Jerusalem from all the nations of the world. R. 5831

A Note on The Holy Spirit

There is consistency in the Scripture teaching that the Father and Son are in full harmony and **oneness** of purpose and operation. And equally consistent is the Scripture teaching respecting the holy Spirit—that it is not another God, but the spirit, influence or power exercised by the one God, our Father, and by his Only Begotten Son—in absolute oneness, therefore, with both of these, who also are **at one** or in full accord.

The careful student has found abundant testimony from the Scriptures, to the effect that there is but one All-mighty God—Jehovah; and that he has highly exalted his First Begotten Son, his Only Begotten Son, to his own nature and to his own throne of the universe; and that next to these in order of rank will be the glorified Church, the Bride, the Lamb's wife and joint-heir—otherwise styled his "brethren." These shall be made associates of his glory, as in the present age they are required to be associates in his sufferings. The students have noticed also, that all scriptures harmonize and agree in the above testimony; and further, that there are no scriptures whatever which, either directly or indirectly, actually or apparently, conflict with these findings. The question then arises, Who, Where, What, is the holy Spirit?

The holy Spirit is variously defined in the Scriptures, and to rightly understand the subject these various definitions must be considered together, and be permitted to throw light upon each other. Notice that the holy Spirit is variously styled—

"The Spirit of God,"
"The Spirit of Christ,"
"The Spirit of Holiness,"
"The Spirit of Truth,"
"The Spirit of a Sound Mind,"
"The Spirit of Liberty,"
"The Spirit of the Father,"
"The Holy Spirit of Promise,"
"The Spirit of Meekness,"
"The Spirit of Understanding,"
"The Spirit of Wisdom,"
"The Spirit of Glory,"
"The Spirit of Counsel,"
"The Spirit of Grace,"
"The Spirit of Adoption,"
"The Spirit of Prophecy."

These various titles, repeated many times, and used interchangeably, give us the full, proper assurance that they all relate to the same holy Spirit—indeed, frequently the word "holy" is added in, combined, as for instance, "The holy Spirit of God," "The holy Spirit of Promise," etc. We must seek an understanding of the subject which will reject none of these appellations, but harmonize them all. It is impossible to harmonize these various statements with the **ordinary idea of a third God**; but it

is entirely consistent with every one of them to understand these various expressions as descriptive of the spirit, disposition and power of one God, our Father; and also the spirit, disposition and power of our Lord Jesus Christ, because he is **at one** with the Father—and also to a certain extent it is the spirit or disposition of all who are truly the Lord's, angels or men, in proportion as they have come into oneness or harmony, with him.

There is absolutely no ground whatever for thinking of or speaking of the holy Spirit as another God, distinct in personality from the Father and the Son. Quite to the contrary of this, notice the fact that it was the Father's Spirit that was communicated to our Lord Jesus, as it is written, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel." (Luke 4:18) Turning to the prophecy from which this quotation is made, we read there, in the Hebrew, "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is on me, because Jehovah hath anointed me to proclaim good tidings to the humble." (Isa. 61:1) And to the same purport we read again, "And the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of reverence of Jehovah." (Isa. 11:2,3) Similarly the same Spirit in Christ is referred to as "The Spirit of Christ," the mind of Christ— "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus our Lord." Phil. 2:5

The holy Spirit's office will be equally important during the Millennial age, in bringing the world of mankind back into harmony with God, under the terms of the New Covenant, through the merits of the dear Redeemer's sacrifice. Accordingly, through the prophet Joel (2:28,29), the Lord has drawn attention to this fact, pointing out that while he will pour his Spirit only upon his servants and handmaidens during this Gospel age, yet "**afterward**" his holy Spirit shall be generally poured upon the world of mankind, "all flesh."* During the Millennial age, then, the world's progress will be in full harmony with the holy Spirit; and in proportion as men shall come into full harmony with that holy Spirit will any of them become eligible to the eternal conditions of life and joy and blessing which lie beyond the Millennial age. The fact that the holy Spirit will cooperate with the glorified Church in the blessing of all the families of the earth is also testified by our Lord. After picturing to us the glories of the Millennium and its abundant supply of truth as a mighty river of the water of life, clear as crystal, he says, "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come! And whosoever will may come, and take of the water of life freely." Rev. 22:17 E164-168

*For a full and complete study on the Holy Spirit, see **Studies in the Scriptures**, Volume 5, **The Atonement Between God and Man**, chapters 8-11.*

* The order of this blessing is reversed in the prophetic statement; quite probably, in order to obscure the matter until the proper time, and thus to hide some of the length and breadth and height and depth of the divine plan, until the due time for it to be known and appreciated.

Peter's Sermon at Pentecost

Acts 2:14-40



Peter Preaching from Classic Bible Art Collection

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.
15 For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.
16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:
17 'AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THE LAST DAYS, SAYS GOD, THAT I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH. YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHESY, YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS.
18 AND ON MY MANSERVANTS AND ON MY MAIDSERVANTS I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT IN THOSE DAYS, AND THEY SHALL PROPHESY.
19 I WILL SHOW WONDERS IN HEAVEN ABOVE AND SIGNS IN THE EARTH BENEATH: BLOOD AND FIRE AND VAPOR OF SMOKE.
20 THE SUN SHALL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS, AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE COMING OF THE GREAT AND AWESOME DAY OF THE LORD.
21 AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS THAT WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED.' "
22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know---
23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death,
24 whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.
25 For David says concerning Him: 'I FORESAW THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE MY FACE, FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, THAT I MAY NOT BE SHAKEN.
26 THEREFORE MY HEART REJOICED, AND MY TONGUE WAS GLAD.

MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL REST IN HOPE.
27 FOR YOU WILL NOT LEAVE MY SOUL IN HADES, NOR WILL YOU ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO SEE CORRUPTION.
28 YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE. YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF JOY IN YOUR PRESENCE.' "
29 "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.
30 Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne.
31 He, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.
32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.
33 Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.
34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "*Sit at My right hand,*
***35 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.*" '**
36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles,
"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

38 Then Peter said to them,
"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."
40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

In this work of **opening the door** of the Kingdom to Israel we find, according to the record, that Peter took the first, most prominent and initiatory part, as we read: "Peter, standing up with [the others of] the eleven, lifted up his voice and said." (Acts 2:14.) Peter was the spokesman, Peter used the "**key**," Peter opened the door, the other apostles cooperating and assisting.

Less than two months had elapsed since the Apostle Peter denied his Lord with

cursing. But here he shows himself the leader of the apostles and the special mouthpiece of the Lord in the opening work of the New Dispensation at Pentecost. How marvelous is the change from weakness to strength, which may come to those who are rightly exercised by life's experiences, as he was! His very stumbling strengthened his character, by arousing him to the necessity of taking the right stand at any cost. Each of God's children should learn this lesson—and should be helped by his defeats, as well as by his victories.

St. Peter preached a most direct sermon, taking for his text the miraculous events of Pentecost, which had drawn the crowd together. He had no apologies to make, but declared himself and his brethren disciples of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus' claim to the office had been abundantly demonstrated by his mighty works and words, "Never man spake like this man." Did they query if this were not the same Jesus that had been crucified, less than two months before? The query was answered most pointedly. Yes, with wicked hands you crucified and slew the Lord of glory. Did they ask how could a Messiah thus ignominiously suffer and how could a dead Messiah be of any use—of whom they preached? The Apostle's answer was a ready one, that it pleased God that a suffering Saviour should be provided and that his death should be the redemption price for Adam and his race; and on this account forgiveness of sins might now be preached. Proceeding he declared that our Lord was not a dead Messiah, but a living one, for, although put to death in the flesh, God had raised him from the dead, and that his disciples were witnesses of the fact, and of his ascension.

We can imagine the Apostle saying, "Let me prove to you from the prophets, whom you acknowledge, that these very things were foretold of the Messiah, Jesus; for instance, the most remarkable thing of all, his Resurrection. Did not the Prophet David foretell of the same, 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (sheol, hades the grave); neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption'! This, "said Peter," was not true of the Prophet David. He died. His soul was not saved from sheol. He still awaits resurrection. But all of this was apparently true of Messiah, whom David, in the figure, represented. Christ's soul was not left in hades. God raised him from the dead the third day. Now he is highly exalted—a Prince and mighty Saviour, able to save you, able to save all who come to him; for the Father hath highly exalted him, that he might be the Saviour of you and of the world, not only as respects spiritual interests, but our temporal interests as well."

Proceeding, the Apostle quoted Joel's prophecy and showed that a portion of it foretold the Pentecostal blessing. He was not led of the spirit to show that there were two parts to that prophecy, and that only one part was fulfilled at that time, and that the other part was to be fulfilled afterward. "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh" will be fulfilled in the future, after the second coming of Christ. That was not yet "meat in due season." However, the quotation was sufficient for its intended purpose. His hearers were pricked to the heart – cut to the heart. They felt terribly, as they thought how true were his words, and how apt his Scripture quotation. They saw themselves as members of their nation red-handed murderers of the Messiah, for whom they had been looking for centuries. The great trouble which would certainly come upon their nation, and to which their prophets referred, they saw

would be a reasonable penalty for their great sin.

What must they do?

Contrition and repentance must necessarily precede any thoroughgoing reformation of character—then or now. If, therefore, any one shall read these words and realize that he himself has been living carelessly, as respects his blessings of God and his faithfulness to the Truth, it is well that he should awaken from his lethargy with a start, knowing assuredly that the end of that way will not have the divine approval. Such should cry out to the Lord for help from the weaknesses of his own nature, and from the delusions and snares of the Adversary; peradventure he may be delivered. In answer to their query the Apostle declared most graciously,

Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers.
Acts 3:17

For if they had known, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory. The matter is bad enough. The guilt is great as it is; but surely the Lord knows that those poor men who cried "Crucify him!" and those who helped to do it were, to a large degree, under the influence of our great Adversary, through ignorance and superstition and blindness, into which he had led them.

St. Peter's message to them was,

Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.
Acts 2:38-39

Christ's sacrifice for sins was not intended to justify people living in sin, but to justify those who, renouncing sin, sought to live separate from it and to come into harmony with God. This is still our message. No one has a right to alter or amend it in any degree. The divine law condemns sin in the flesh still. The divine provision for the covering of the sins of those who believe in Jesus applies only to such as seek to put away sin, and to strive for righteousness. For such alone are all the divine arrangements and blessings. Baptism for the "remission of sins" was to the Jew only,* to those who had already been baptized into Moses in the sea and the cloud. The sins thus figuratively washed away did not include original sin, with its death penalty, but merely minor transgressions against the Mosaic Law on the part of the Covenant of the people. The symbolic washing represented a return to loyalty, to obedience to God, to the extent of their ability, so far as their hearts were concerned. Thus coming into accord with Moses, the typical Messiah, they would be by faith transferred to his antitype, Christ.

* *See note on following page*

*This washing or cleansing of the Jews, preparatory to their acceptance in Christ, continued until the middle wall of partition was broken down between Jew and Gentile, until the natural branches, those who did not receive fellowship in the Body of Christ, were broken off. Since then, baptism for the remission of sins, John's baptism, is entirely wrong, according to the Scriptures. (For details on this see *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. VI., Chapter 10.)

The Apostle pointed out that the promise of the great blessing through Messiah belonged to Israel according to the flesh, and that those promises had not yet lost their vitality—had not yet lapsed. Hence it was for them and their children, as well as for all mankind, "even as many as your God shall call."

Everywhere the Scriptures remind us that no man taketh this honor to himself—the honor of being a member of the Body of Christ, the honor of being a member of the Royal Priesthood, etc. Only those called of God, drawn by the Father, can now come unto the Son and receive all of these blessings. This remains true to this day.

With many other words St. Peter exhorted and testified, saying,

Save yourself from this untoward generation. (KJV)

How successful was this message which was backed by the holy Spirit may be readily seen from the statement that three thousand gladly received the message and were baptized and continued steadfast in this teaching, and in fellowship and prayers.

The Harvest Time of this Gospel Age is now in progress, as then was the Harvest of the Jewish Age. Now, as then, there are tests and stones of stumbling, purposely permitted of the Father for our proving, testing, development. Not the Head of the Body is now to be crucified, but the members—especially the feet of the Body of Christ, yet upon the earth. The great Adversary has blinded in a most marvelous manner some, of whom better things might have been expected. Our Lord's words are proving true—that his message would cause a measure of strife, which would thus reveal, manifest, those who are of a wrong spirit, but indirectly bring blessings to the faithful, who are willing to suffer with him and to lay down their lives for the brethren. The persecutors number amongst them some of the great and noble and religiously prominent of the world. What is our attitude? Are we sympathizing with this condition of things, or are we standing loyally, firmly for the Truth, the Lord?

As it was then, in the Lord's providence, that he drew the attention of those in a wrong attitude to the true conditions of things, that they might recover themselves from the snare of the Adversary, so he is now doing here. He is willing and able to expose the wrong doing, and to call the attention of the honest-hearted to the true situation.

The Scriptures clearly indicate that the present generation is an untoward one —one that is unfavorable to righteousness. The Scriptures give delineations of the

selfish spirit of our day, the loveless spirit, with its anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife, backbiting and slandering tendencies, and they tell us to what these will ultimately lead—to the great time of trouble, with which this Age will end.

What should we do? The Apostle Peter's words are appropriate:

Save yourselves. (KJV)

Do not wait to try to save Christendom. Let each one of us get his own heart right with God. It is an individual matter—who will stand and who will fall. According to the Scriptures and according to Israel as a type, the many will fall to the few who will remain standing. To save ourselves, we must take prompt, energetic action. Our repentance must be full. Our turning from the wrong ways must be positive. The promises are unto you and to your children, and to many afar off.

The Pentecostal message was a Gospel of mercy, of forgiveness, of sympathy, even for those who had crucified the Lord. Like the other sermons of this Apostle, and like the sermons of all the apostles, this sermon contained not one suggestion of eternal torment, but was full of mercy and grace—"speaking peace through Jesus Christ our Lord." The result was that three thousand were prompt to accept Jesus as the Messiah. They were convinced by their reason and by the evidences presented in the sermon by the Apostle and others of the brethren; thus they complied with the advice of the Apostle. R. 4308

Then those who gladly received his word were baptized, and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts 2:41-42

That the new converts were "Israelites indeed" was demonstrated by the fact that they did not speedily fall away and become cold. On the contrary, we are informed that they continued stedfast, recognizing the teachings of the apostles—that God specially used them as his representatives and mouthpieces for the instruction of his Church. They thus continued in fellowship with the household of faith, and this would imply meeting with them every first-day of the week to celebrate the Lord's resurrection, to unite their prayers at the throne of grace, and to build one another up in the most holy faith. Breaking the spiritual bread on these occasions, they also united in a common meal, in remembrance of the Lord's first meeting with them and making himself known after his resurrection in the blessing and breaking of bread. (Luke 24:35.) This has no reference to the Memorial Supper, which was celebrated yearly, and not with bread alone, but also with the cup, of equal importance. R. 2657, R. 4307, 4308, 4309, R. 2932

All Things In Common

Acts 2:43-47

Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

"Fear came upon every soul"—–reverence–– an appreciation, to some extent at least, of the wonderful relationship to God into which they had been introduced, and of the wonderful power of God working in their midst, and especially manifested through the miracles and signs which the apostles were thus permitted to perform for the establishment of the faith of the justified.

It has been assumed by some that communism as that term is applied today, was practised in the early Church; and it is the claim of some that it should never have been discontinued, but should always obtain amongst the Lord's people. We answer,

First, that the early Church did not practise what is now known as communism;

Second, that something akin to what the early Church did practise (but modified) still is the rule amongst the Lord's saints;

Third, the extreme view (and practice) of the early Church was apparently not intended to remain, was never enjoined by the Lord nor the apostles, and serves rather as an evidence against the feasibility of the doctrines of communism under present conditions.

So far as the record shows there was no compulsory division of wealth, such as communism proposes. On the contrary, everything was voluntary; and everything of the same kind is just as free, just as voluntary, and just as proper, now as then,—– no more so, no less so. Some of those who owned farms and personal property sold them and brought the money and placed it at the Apostles' feet—gave it into their charge. Some may have given all that they had in this manner, but it is not so stated. On the contrary, various things give the inference that Barnabas, who sold the field and gave the money, may still have retained other properties, which no doubt, he would have been willing to have disposed of later, and to have made similar use of the money as it might be needed.

The sin of Ananias and Sapphira did not consist in their not putting all of their property into the common treasury, but in their deceitfulness in the matter; ––in their pretending to give the entire proceeds of one property when they did not do

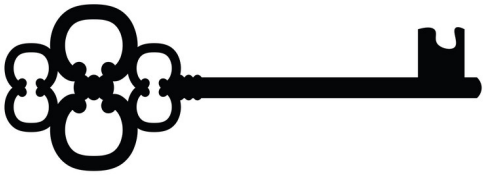
so. Some Scriptures clearly intimate that some of the Lord's people at that time had private possessions aside from those which were put into the common fund. (See Acts 12:12; 21:16.)

It is possible, of course, that in the two instances cited the properties might have been given to the community and might have been returned when the community failed, and when the believers were scattered abroad. On the other hand, we think it reasonable to suppose that the selling of the possessions was merely to such an extent as was necessary to supply the wants of all---so that none of the Lord's people might lack while others had superfluity. This kind of brotherliness and common interest should still prevail amongst the Lord's people. Indeed, to a considerable extent it must prevail, or else we are none of his.

It is noteworthy that the apostles neither commanded nor advised communism; nor do their writings intimate that it prevailed in the early Church. As showing that there were both rich and poor in the assemblies of the primitive Church, note the Apostle Paul's words to Timothy, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Tim. 6:17.) The same Apostle reproves some of the wealthy brethren for improper displays in connection with the Memorial Supper, saying, "Have ye not houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not [wealth]?" (1 Cor. 11:22.) The Apostle John intimates differences in financial condition when he asks, How could he who loves God shut up the bowels of compassion against a brother, who lacks life's necessities. (1 John 3:17.) The Apostle James says, "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart, and be ye warmed and fed, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" ----James 2:15,16. R. 2932

The early Church, full of love for the Lord and for each other, is a beautiful and in many respects an ideal picture, in which we can rejoice: no wonder it is recorded that they had joy, gladness, in their hearts, and in their thanksgiving to God, and that the people in general, their neighbors, were pleased with them and rejoiced in their loving spirit. How delightful it would be if all the Lord's people in the world today could be thus in harmony with each other and appreciated by their friends and neighbors. Indeed, we must suppose that the Lord specially shielded the infant Church for a short season, until it should become somewhat established in knowledge and in faith, else the Great Adversary would have raised up opposition and persecution more quickly than he did. Even as it was, it was but a little time until the persecution arose, and with it the testing of those who had espoused the cause of Jesus. R. 2932

The Second Key



In the case of Cornelius the Lord sent messengers to Peter, and specially directed him by a vision to follow their invitation, and thus particularly used him in opening the door of mercy, liberty and privilege to the Gentiles---that they also might come into and share the privilege of the high calling of the New Creation. F221

Jesus Healed a Centurion's Servant Luke 7:2-3

A certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant.

Evidently he was naturally a benevolent man, well disposed, and had a heart, which, had he been born an Israelite and entitled to the privileges of that elect nation, would have proved to be good soil in which the good seed of the Kingdom, planted by our Lord, would have brought forth good results and have constituted him one of the "brethren." This is attested not only by his faith, but also by the fact that his servant was "dear unto him," so loved that he went to much trouble to secure his healing. In his humility he felt unworthy of our Lord's favors, realizing, as did the Syrophenician woman, that the Gentiles were as "dogs" who could have only the crumbs from the children's table. Hence he got the elders of his city to request the Master to heal his servant; and they urged his request before our Lord, saying that he was a good man, "He loveth our nation and hath built us a synagogue."

The beauty of the centurion's faith and humility was specially manifest in his afterthought and message of apology to the Lord for having asked him to come to his house to see his servant; for he felt that in so doing he had only put him on a par with other physicians, and besides was taking him away from other and more important work: hence his message, I am unworthy that you should come under my roof; but being myself a man clothed with authority, and accustomed to doing things by my servant's hands, I know that you can do the same on a higher plane with your servants and agents: therefore simply speak the word of command, and it shall be done.

This simple, noble faith and humility were very pleasing to the Lord, who declared, "I have not found so great faith,—no not in Israel," where he had much more reason to expect it. His faith was rewarded by the healing of his servant, and our Lord, who had received his message through the Elders at Capernaum (verse 3), and who had already started toward the Centurion's house, discontinued his journey and instantly granted the healing of the servant.

Impressed by the faith and goodness of this Centurion, so unexpected among Roman soldiers, we were considering that it would be "just like the Lord" to send the gospel to such a noble Gentile soon after the Jewish favor would end, when the doors of divine love and mercy would be opened to Gentiles as well as Israelites. Then the Lord brought to our memory Cornelius, the first Gentile to whom the gospel message was sent. (Acts 10:1-8.) We remembered that he also was a Centurion, and of him also it is recorded that he was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." It is not probable that among the Roman soldiers of Palestine there were two Centurions of such similarly exceptional character. The residence of the Centurion mentioned by Luke is not stated but that of Cornelius is mentioned: it was Caesarea. R. 1922

When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"
Luke 7:9

A Centurion Called Cornelius Acts 10:1-8

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.

About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him,
"Cornelius!"

And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said,
"What is it, lord?"

So he said to him,
"Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do."

And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

Our Lord's personal ministry was to the Jews only, and likewise His disciples labored only with the Jews for the fixed period of time—until the end of "the seventy weeks" of the promise of Divine favor to that nation. Those symbolic weeks ended three and a half years after Jesus' crucifixion. Then the door was thrown open to the Gentiles also, Cornelius being the first Convert. —Acts 10.

It was just like the Lord to keep in mind this exceptional character among the Gentiles, and when the due time came for the gospel to be preached to the Gentiles, to send it to him first. "Them that honor me, I will honor," saith the Lord; and so it appears in this case that the Centurion was doubly honored, first in the granting of his request and in the friendship and commendation of the Lord; and subsequently in being the first Gentile to receive the holy spirit of adoption as a son and heir of God.

Cornelius had his vision first. He saw in a vision "openly," not in a dream, an angel of God coming in unto him. He talked with the angel and received the assurance that his prayers and his alms of years had now been received of the Lord, because the "due time" had come—the end of Israel's covenanted favor. We may be sure that at the same time the alms and prayers of all other Gentiles ascended up as incense

to the Lord. We may be sure that blessings were arranged also for all such, and the Gospel sent to them, though not in so marked a manner as to Cornelius, because the Lord would make of his case a special lesson for the benefit of the apostles and of all of us who have lived since. In recounting this matter elsewhere Cornelius says that the angel told him to send for St. Peter and gave him his address and added, "When he is come, he shall tell thee words, which shall be to the saving of thyself and house."

"And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.' "
Acts 11:13-14

Cornelius was instructed to send for the Apostle Peter, and was informed in advance that certain words he would tell him were of importance; —-essential to his further progress in knowledge and in faith, —-and through these into divine favor. Cornelius' readiness of mind is shown by the promptness of his obedience. He not only prayed, but prepared to cooperate with God in the answering of his own prayer. The three persons sent (two of them household servants, and one of them a soldier, all devout persons, who feared God) give us good evidence that this Gentile who was feeling after God, and striving to the best of his ability to please and honor him, had not been keeping his light and his faith under a bushel. It had shone out before his family and servants, and before the soldiers under his control. This is the kind of man whom God delights to acknowledge, whatever may be his nationality or the color of his skin, and all such are recognized of the Lord, and favored above others with light and truth-—ever since the close of typical Israel's special favor. There is a lesson here that some of the Lord's people need. It is that they should let the light of truth shine through them upon all with whom they come in contact, —-that the spirit of devotion should pervade every family, every household, including the servants.

Cornelius was rejoiced, and showed his faith by immediately sending messengers to the Apostle. He did not wait to see if Peter would come; he knew that he would come; he had faith in the Lord's promises through the angel: accordingly he gathered together his friends and relatives and household—-those upon whom he had been exercising an influence, and who, like himself, were pious and earnestly desirous of knowing all that they might learn concerning the way of life, ——the way of reconciliation and harmony with God and all the principles of righteousness which he represents.
R. 5048, R. 1923, R. 4344, R. 2989

The record shows that Cornelius was a just man, a reverential man, a benevolent man, a man every way prepared to be a follower of Jesus—-a Christian, the only obstacle being that he was not a Jew. That obstacle was not Jewish prejudice, but an insurmountable one—-God's unwillingness to deal with any others than his covenanted people of the seed of Abraham. So as soon as the Covenant arrangement with Israel terminated, and God's "due time" came for dealing with such Gentiles as were in proper condition of heart, he had no difficulty in finding messengers to convey the good tidings. R. 4344

Peter's Vision

Acts 10:9-23

The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat, but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him,
"Rise, Peter. Kill and eat."

But Peter said,
"Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

And a voice spoke to him again the second time,
"What God has cleansed you must not call common."

This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again. Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him,
"Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them."

Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said,
"Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?"

And they said,
"Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you."

Then he invited them in and lodged them. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

While they were approaching Joppa, Peter at noon-time betook him to prayer, perhaps seeking special guidance as to what should be his next move in Christian work. He got the answer through a dream-vision and through the messengers of Cornelius.

Peter, with all the prejudices belonging to the Jews for centuries, needed to be prepared to receive this first out-and-out Gentile brought into the Church. This was done by means of a vision, so that Peter, with six brethren from Joppa, came promptly to the centurion's home on the following day–– "doubting nothing," because evidently the Lord was leading him in the matter. We see, too, that of all the disciples Peter was the best one to be chosen for this work, because of his impetuous disposition and zeal to follow the Lord's directions quickly and heartily; secondly, because being the oldest of the apostles, and in many respects the most influential one, his course would have the greater weight with the others. It is difficult for us to conceive the prejudice of centuries, in the minds of the Jews, against any thought of the Gentiles being fellow-heirs with them of the Abrahamic promises. They considered it a settled matter that God's favor had been set apart to their nation; and that it could not possibly go outside that nation to others, in the sense of making those others equally acceptable to God. These views were based,

First, upon the promises of God to Abraham, "Thy seed," etc.;

Secondly, upon the fact that Israelites were not permitted to have general dealings with the Gentiles, nor to intermarry with them;

Thirdly, added to all this, the rulers of the Jews had even gone further, and exaggerated to some extent these differences.

But now a new dispensation had come; the "seventy weeks" of favor to Israel had expired; and the Lord began to extend his favor beyond the Jews. Peter went with the messengers, nothing fearing, and yet not for a moment presupposing what actually took place. He took with him six men, probably as witnesses, or as an escort, or because of the dignity of the person upon whom he was calling.
R. 4344 and R. 2989

It is quite immaterial to us how the power, influence, Spirit of God, addressed Peter, giving him this information. It is sufficient that we know that the Lord did direct the Apostle, and in such a manner that the Apostle clearly discerned it, and that correctly, as is shown by the sequel of the narrative. E274

I Am Just a Man

Acts 10:24-26

And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

**But Peter lifted him up, saying,
"Stand up. I myself am also a man."**

When Peter arrived at the house of Cornelius, and the latter saw him and recognized him as God's appointed servant for the bringing of this message to him, he prostrated himself at Peter's feet in worship. How different Cornelius was from the majority of Romans, —especially of Roman soldiers and officers! Instead of looking down upon the Jew, —instead of thinking of himself as a representative of the greatest government in the world, at the time, Cornelius was filled with the spirit of humility, and the fact that his visitor represented the Lord called forth from him some of the same feelings that were filling his heart in respect to the Lord himself, —feelings of reverence.

But if the centurion was noble and humble, the Apostle Peter showed himself in response to be no less noble and loyal to God—for he at once began to lift up the centurion, saying, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." (Verse 26.) Peter commends himself to our hearts by this noble course—by this refusal to receive unauthorized homage; and he saved himself also from a great deal of trial by thus disowning supernatural honor and authority promptly, —by recognizing his true position, that he was only a broken and emptied vessel, valuable only because of the filling of the vessel with the Lord's spirit; —distinguished only because the Lord had been pleased to use him as a vessel of mercy and truth. Not many today are disposed to offer worship to fellow-creatures, and not many, except high dignitaries in the nominal churches, such as popes and prelates, consent to receive worship; but all such have a rebuke in the course of the Apostle Peter in this case. There is perhaps little danger in our day that any of the "brethren" would receive too much honor of men, because the spirit of our time is running in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, wherever a spirit of servility is manifest, it becomes the duty of the brother to whom it is offered to refuse it; and to point his fellow-servant to the Lord, as the real benefactor of us all, —from whom comes every good and perfect gift, by whatever channels he may be pleased to use. R. 2989

Words of Life

Acts 10:27-33

And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. Then he said to them,
"You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

So Cornelius said,
"Four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.'
So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."

Peter doubtless was surprised to find that Cornelius had invited into his house his kinsfolk and special neighbors, who with his own family made quite an assemblage. The simplicity of the centurion's faith was thus clearly attested. When St. Peter inquired why Cornelius had sent for him, he explained the visit of the angel and declared that now they were ready to hear the words, the

Wonderful Words of Life.

Then Peter opened his mouth and said:
"In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ---He is Lord of all. . . .
Acts 10:34-36

Let us note carefully what these words of life were. They were the simple story of the Cross: The story of man's fall, his sentence to death, his hopelessness as respects extricating himself from that condition and sentence; and the remedy which God in his mercy provided. The essence of the message was that "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and rose again for our justification." The message continued, and showed how the justified ones were invited to become joint-

sacrificers with and thus joint-sharers in Christ's coming glory. The centurion's heart had been troubled. There was something in the message that satisfied his longings as nothing else had ever done. He believed in the Redeemer and was thus justified. His consecration to the Lord, of years' standing, now became intelligent and specific. As his heart went out to the Lord in full acceptance of the Divine terms, in full consecration of his little all to the Divine service, the Lord accepted it, and manifested the acceptance; just as he had done with the consecrated Jewish believers at Pentecost. God having thus recognized Cornelius as a disciple and follower of Christ, a New Creature begotten of the holy Spirit, Peter tells us that he could not believe otherwise than that it was right for him to explain baptism to the centurion, and to give him water immersion, symbolic of the immersion into Christ's death, which he had already experienced.

We note with keen interest the Apostle's preaching, that we may clearly discern the life-giving message which he brought, from which Cornelius and his associates derived their saving faith. We find that Peter's discourse was the same gospel message which he had delivered repeatedly before. It was Jesus—the good, the obedient—and the sacrifice for sins which he accomplished when he died on the cross. It was the message of the hope of a resurrection from the dead through him, as attested by his resurrection by the mighty power of God. It was the message that a ransom for sinners having been paid to Justice the Lord is now pleased to accept sinners on conditions of faith, reverence and obedience to righteousness according to ability. Peter's discourse was "the old, old story" which to many has become tedious and distasteful; but which to every soul, in the right attitude, is the Father's message of forgiveness of sins, and reconciliation, through the death of his Son. This is the same message which God is still sending by all who are his true ambassadors. There is no other gospel, and those who present another message are not, in their service, ambassadors for God, messengers and mouthpieces of his spirit.

He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.
Acts 10:42-43

After telling the message itself, Peter explained to Cornelius that Jesus commanded the apostles to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead. (Verse 42.) The coming judgment, or trial, of the world, is an important part of the gospel message; and is not to be neglected in the preaching of the gospel.

Peter, in discoursing on the matter, evidently had his mind more widely opened than ever before to a realization of what our Lord meant in giving the general commission to preach the Gospel, not merely to the Jews, but to whoever would have an ear to hear. Peter was not expecting "ears" amongst the Gentiles; but now he perceived that God was not a respecter of nations and features, etc., but that the message was open for all, and he did his best to present it. R. 4344 and R. 2989

The Holy Spirit Poured Out

Acts 10:44-48

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered,
"Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

Cornelius and his devout household and friends had been waiting for just such a message of divine grace; and as the words fell from Peter's lips they were quickly and gladly appropriated in the hearts of his hearers, who were by this time accepting Jesus with the same fullness and appreciation as Peter himself. Their hearts being thus in the right condition before God, it would have been appropriate for Peter to have said to them, Now brethren, your proper course will be to be baptized into Jesus by a water baptism, —symbolizing your faith in him and your full consecration to be dead with him, as his faithful followers. But Peter was not ready to take such a step, we may be sure. He was surprised that God was willing that the Gentiles should even know about the wonderful provisions of salvation in Jesus; which of itself would have been a blessing. But he was not yet prepared to expect that the Gentiles would be received of the Lord on practically the same terms, and with exactly the same manifestations of divine favor as were the Jews. To make good Peter's insufficiency of knowledge to baptize them, and to lay his hands upon them that they might receive the gifts of the spirit, —and as a lesson to Peter also, —the holy spirit was given to Cornelius and his companions without the laying on of hands—in the same manner that it was bestowed upon the assembly at Pentecost.

Peter quickly learned the lesson, and undoubtedly his readiness to learn it was in large measure due to his humility and sincerity of heart, the fullness of his consecration to the Lord, and his desire that the divine will should be done in every particular. Peter and his companions from Joppa, "they of the circumcision," were astonished at God's favor upon the Gentiles, yet they were not envious. They were glad to welcome as cleansed, as brothers, all whom the Lord indicated that he had received into his fellowship. The result of this outpouring of the spirit was a grand testimony meeting. The record is that they "magnified God," praising him, rejoicing in their acceptance, etc.

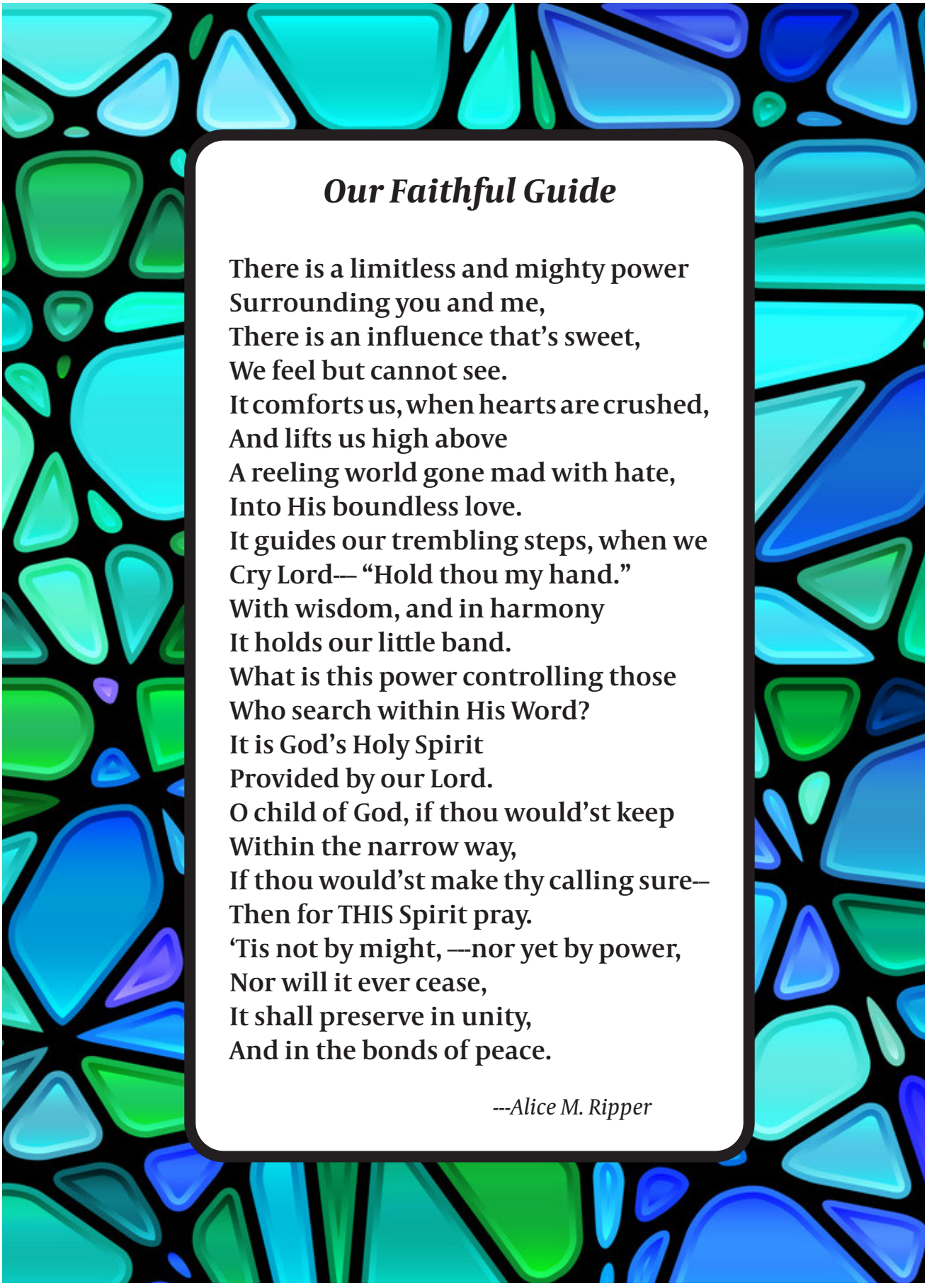
Then Peter drew their attention to the symbolical baptism and the propriety of observing it. We are not given his arguments on the subject; possibly he explained

that in thus publicly symbolizing their consecration to the Lord they would be strengthening their own faith; buttressing their own determination to live and die the Lord's; possibly, too, he showed them how beautiful is the significance of the water immersion as a symbol of death and burial with Christ; as a symbol also of a resurrection to newness of life in the present time, and to a newness of life in perfect bodies at the second advent of the Lord. Or possibly he merely contented himself with explaining to them that it was the Lord's own method of doing, and that he commanded that all of his followers should similarly be immersed.

Having called for an expression from those present—especially from the brethren who accompanied him from Joppa—to know if any objection could be thought of why these dear brethren, who had believed in the Lord, who had given evidence of their consecration and good works, even before they knew of the Lord and his glorious plan, and who now had been accepted of God, and his acceptance manifested—why these should not be admitted to every blessing and arrangement which God had provided for his faithful ones—irrespective of their being Gentiles by birth. No objection being offered Peter commanded [directed] them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

He had been sent to teach them, and he delivered his message with no uncertain sound. Similarly the Lord directs all of his people, all who have an ear to listen and to hear his message, through the Apostle Peter, in this lesson. We command no one, for we have no authority; we are not apostles. We can merely point out the command of the apostle; the example of all the apostles; the example of our Lord, etc., and leave the matter with the "ear" and conscience of each. Indeed, where we recognize that the true immersion of the will, into the will of Christ, has been accomplished, we may properly recognize the brother or sister in full fellowship, even though he or she has not performed the outward symbolic immersion in water; because we are living in a time when great confusion on this subject prevails, and when it would be improper that we should cast off, reject, or even temporarily disfellowship any brother or sister who gives evidence of having had the real antitypical baptism into Christ. R. 2990

Peter now perceived the meaning of the vision granted him on the house-top, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common or unclean." The cleansing at first was merely typical and to Israel only, accomplished through the blood of bulls and goats. The antitypical cleansing through the blood of Christ was confined for a time to Israel only. But now, in the Lord's providence, the middle wall of partition was broken down, so that all believers amongst the Gentiles, seeking fellowship with the Lord, might become adopted members in Spiritual Israel, the "household of faith," and might be covered by the merit of the better sacrifice of Christ. R. 4345



Our Faithful Guide

There is a limitless and mighty power
Surrounding you and me,
There is an influence that's sweet,
We feel but cannot see.
It comforts us, when hearts are crushed,
And lifts us high above
A reeling world gone mad with hate,
Into His boundless love.
It guides our trembling steps, when we
Cry Lord--- "Hold thou my hand."
With wisdom, and in harmony
It holds our little band.
What is this power controlling those
Who search within His Word?
It is God's Holy Spirit
Provided by our Lord.
O child of God, if thou would'st keep
Within the narrow way,
If thou would'st make thy calling sure--
Then for THIS Spirit pray.
'Tis not by might, ---nor yet by power,
Nor will it ever cease,
It shall preserve in unity,
And in the bonds of peace.

---Alice M. Ripper

A Change of Dispensations Acts 11:1-4; 12-17

Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying,
"You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"

But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning.
"Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.' And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"

The news of Peter's visit to Cornelius and the baptism of the latter, a Gentile, into the Christian Church, created quite a hubbub—not in Jerusalem only, but throughout Judea. Peter may have been called to Jerusalem by the brethren to give some explanation of such an innovation; —or, learning of the commotion, he may have gone voluntarily to explain the situation and to set the minds of the brethren at rest respecting the propriety of his course. He took with him the six of the Joppa brethren who had accompanied him to the house of Cornelius. This was a wise course; Peter recognized that however well satisfied he himself might be respecting the propriety of what he had done, it was but just to the brethren to give as explicit a testimony on the subject as possible—to avoid the least ground for criticism or division of sentiment in the Church.

We note the divine providence which guided in this matter—

- that it was Peter, the eldest, and in some respects the strongest of the apostles who was chosen for this service; and
- that he was guided in judgment in respect to taking with him six of the prominent Joppa brethren. Thus does the Lord supervise the affairs of his people, while yet leaving the matter without a special direct revelation—teaching them rather by their experiences and his providential leadings.

We should not be surprised that the apostles would be opposed to Peter's going to the Gentiles with the gospel message; such a course was contrary to all the traditions of their nation for over sixteen centuries—seemingly in contradiction of many of the statements of the prophets: prudence, therefore, bade them beware

lest the new light and blessing which they had received should mislead them into too great liberty – into license contrary to the Lord's Word. They probably called to mind that the promises indicated that God's blessings were to come to the world through Israel—– "the forces of the Gentiles should come unto thee" —–the "sons of strangers shall build up thy walls" —– "the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish," etc. They may also have recalled our Lord's words at the beginning of his ministry when sending forth the apostles, and subsequently, the "seventy," he said, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; for I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." —–Matt. 15:24.

In view of these things the apostles and brethren did only their duty in calling Peter to account—–in seeing to it that they took no liberty with the Lord's directions—– that they did not attempt to get beyond, or to circumvent his arrangements.

They did realize that a change of dispensation was upon them, and that in some important sense Israel was rejected by the Lord, so that only the remnant accepting Christ were now in divine favor; but they did not realize fully what this meant, nor see clearly how the Lord's promises centering in Israel were yet to be fulfilled. We can see now, in the light of providential leadings and apostolic teachings, and in the light of prophetic fulfillment, what it was not possible for them to see clearly at that time.

We can see that natural Israel was being rejected, —–blinded with a blindness which would last for nearly nineteen centuries. We can see God's purpose to elect, in the interim, the spiritual seed of Abraham; taking, firstly, from the natural Israelites all found worthy; and secondly, completing the election with chosen ones selected from among the Gentiles—–possessing the spirit of Abraham, the spirit of faith and obedience. We can see, that this Spiritual Israel was not fully explained through the promises and through the prophets; but that the elect church in the prophecies was counted in the Messianic promises—–as members of the body of Messiah of which Jesus is the Head, "God blessed forever." (Rom. 9:5.) We can see, that not until this body of Messiah shall be complete will the Lord's promises to natural Israel have fulfillment; —–then their blindness being turned away (Rom. 11:26-32), they will become the leading nation of earth, representative of the spiritual Kingdom of God, the glorified Church, the Messianic body: then the forces of the Gentiles will come to them, and all earthly interests will co-operate, and a blessing through Israel shall proceed to all the families of the earth.

The Charges Against Peter

It is rather peculiar, that the charges made against Peter were not that he had recognized Cornelius as a Christian and baptized him and his household, but that he had gone into their house and had eaten bread with them—–proceedings which were contrary to Jewish custom entirely—–the recognition of the Gentiles as being on an equality with the Jews—–a matter which had been settled to the contrary with them, from time immemorial. Singularly, too, the Apostle Peter in his defense

entirely ignored their charges and proceeded to acquit himself as though they had charged him in the way we would have expected—with receiving a Gentile into Christian brotherhood. Yet Peter's course was just the proper one, and, undoubtedly, he was guided thereto.

Peter's simple, humble, unvarnished explanation was a rehearsal of the facts in the case. He considered that the evidence which had convinced him that he was right, would similarly convince the others; and he was correct in this. Had he been arrogantly disposed, a great breach in the church might have resulted; —but no; the Lord was at the helm, and had Peter been out of proper condition of heart would not have used him, but some humbler brother for this service.

Peter rehearsed his experiences, the Lord's leadings, going into the smallest details, so that the brethren might have the benefit of the situation as fully as though they had been in his stead; and to their credit, the record says, that, when they had heard the particulars, so far from further murmuring against Peter or finding fault with his course, they glorified God. This shows us clearly that their opposition to the extension of the gospel favor was not the result of any narrowness or meanness of heart; but was the result of conscientious conviction respecting the divine program. They were gradually learning the lesson that a new dispensation was being ushered in, by divine providence, and their entire anxiety was that they might run no faster than the Lord's spirit, through his Word and providences, would direct them—glad, however, to note the leadings and to receive the lessons and to act accordingly.

Similarly, we today are living in a time of changing dispensations; similarly, the Lord's providence is now guiding his people to a clearer appreciation of his plan—to a discernment of certain changes of dispensation now in progress:

- **First**, that as in the end of the Jewish age the nominal systems of fleshly Israel were rejected of the Lord, and ignored, so now the nominal systems of spiritual Israel are rejected of the Lord, and all "Israelites indeed" are being gathered out of them.

- **Second**, as it was a difficult matter for the Jews to realize that divine favor would extend beyond their nation to the Gentiles, so now it is a difficult matter for Christian people to comprehend that divine favor does not end with the election of the Christian Church; but that, on the contrary, the blessing of all the families of the earth must there begin; and that the new dispensation, the Millennium, in which this favor to the world is to be bestowed by the Church, is nigh, even at the door.

As Peter was patient in his explanation of the Lord's providence and leadings in respect to the greater lengths and breadths of divine favor, so now it behooves all of the Lord's people to be very patient, very gentle, and as wise as serpents in presenting to their fellow Christians, true Israelites, the evidence which the Lord's providence has furnished to us, in respect to the world-wide blessings and their nearness. Our Lord's words are applicable, "Be ye wise as serpents, harmless as doves." —Matt. 10:16.

Peter explained to his hearers the simple gospel message which he had presented to the Gentiles, and which they had so gladly received; that it was in no sense a perversion of the message preached to the Jews, and in no degree were any of the gospel's conditions modified to win Gentile approval; it was the same gospel that had blessed them which now refreshed and blessed the Gentiles. He told them of his surprise when the Lord manifested his favor toward the Gentiles by bestowing some of the gifts of the holy spirit upon them---similar to those bestowed upon the Jewish believers at Pentecost, and subsequently transmitted through the apostles. He declares that this manifestation of divine favor called to his mind the words of the Lord, "John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the holy spirit." (Acts 1:5.) By this he understood clearly that the holy spirit baptism was of much greater importance than water baptism; and he understood, further, that only the "**you**" class would be baptized with the holy spirit; and hence he could not logically ignore the fact that the Gentiles having received the same spirit must be in the Lord's estimation reckoned as members of the same body of Christ, and eligible to baptism, etc. He concluded his argument with a question which must have appealed to all of his hearers;

Who was I that I should withstand God?

The whole company agreed, that Peter would have had no right to withstand the will of the Lord; but that every propriety called upon him to conform his teachings and his conduct to the Lord's arrangements; and so under this wise presentation the entire company came into full harmony of heart and mind. R. 2995

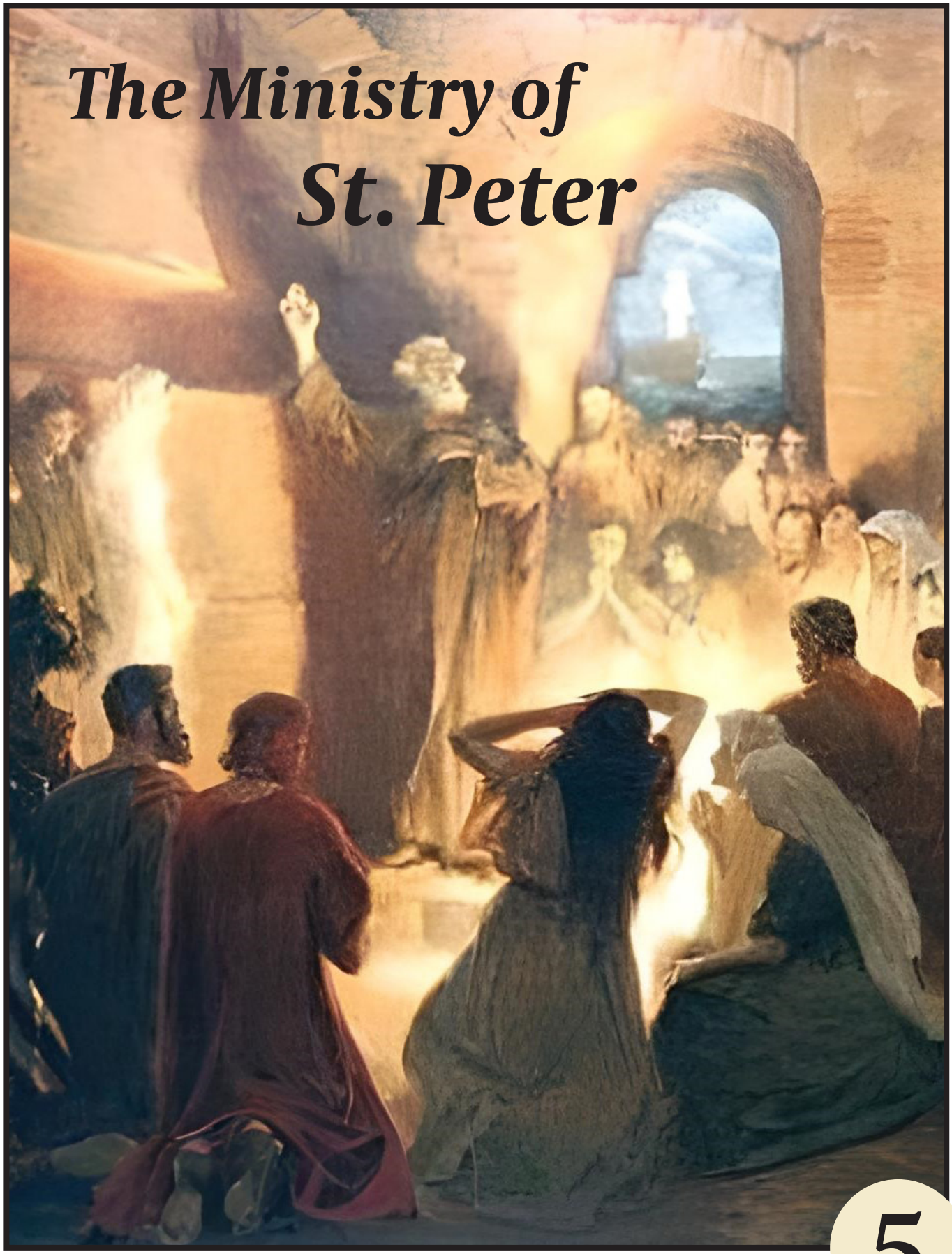
When they heard these things they became silent, and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."
Acts 11:18

The New Testament writers claim a divine anointing which enabled them to realize the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the sacrifice of Christ. They, though prejudiced as Jews to think of every blessing as limited to their own people (Acts 11:1-18), were enabled to see that while their nation would be blessed, all the families of the earth should be blessed also, with and through them. They saw also that, before the blessing of either Israel or the world, a selection would be made of a "little flock" from both Jews and Gentiles, who, being tried, would be found worthy to be made joint-heirs of the glory and honor of the Great Deliverer, and sharers with him of the honor of blessing Israel and all the nations. Rom. 8:17

These writers point out the harmony of this view with what is written in the Law and the Prophets; and the grandeur and breadth of the plan they present more than meets the most exalted conception of what it purports to be---

"Good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people." A59

The Ministry of St. Peter



St. Peter Preaching the Gospel in the Catacombs by Jan Styka, 1858-1925

5

A Lame Man is Healed

Acts 3:1-8

Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple, who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said,
"Look at us."

So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said,
"Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them----walking, leaping, and praising God.

Probably it was not long after the day of Pentecost that the events here transpired. The believers, filled with their new joy, went frequently to the Temple for prayer and thanksgiving, and here Peter and John were attending the Temple service at the hour of prayer, three o'clock in the afternoon.

These two had been with the Lord and with each other for now several years. Both had been disciples of John the Baptist, and previously they two had been together in the fishing business. They were also specially favored amongst the twelve, being with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, and in the inner circle in the Garden of Gethsemane, etc. Although Peter was probably the eldest of the disciples, and John probably the youngest, and although their dispositions were quite different in many respects, apparently there was a strong element of harmony between them–––they both loved the Lord very intensely, and they were both of ardent temperament. It was natural, therefore, that these two should be considerably in each other's company because of special compatibility.

As the apostles evidently went frequently to the Temple, and probably often by the same route, through the "Beautiful Gate," it is more than likely that the lame beggar, who had long been accustomed to that locality, in seeking alms, had seen them almost daily. Indeed, it would not be surprising if a knowledge of the Pentecostal wonders which had converted several thousand, and been "noised abroad," had reached the poor beggar, as well as many others of the religious class, who assembled almost daily at the Temple. Quite evidently therefore, the beggar

knew Peter and John in advance of his healing. If so, it would to some extent account for his readiness of faith, by which, accepting the Apostle's word and hand, he was healed.

Why the Apostle Peter on this particular occasion was led to bestow a blessing upon this man we may never know, for it is probable that in that time, when there were no hospitals for the lame and blind, etc., the Apostles frequently passed by others as badly crippled and distressed as this one, without proffering aid. It would seem, however, that the man was an "Israelite indeed" —from the way in which he received the Lord's blessing. The connections seem to indicate that the Lord's providence directed the apostles to him specially, on this account. And so it is with those of the Lord's people today who are in a right attitude of heart. They will, whatever their condition, find much to be thankful for, and can trace the Lord's providence and grace in life's affairs, notwithstanding its trials and difficulties. Such people are the objects of God's care, and have the assurance that all things are working together for their good. The Lord's providence may not always bring them physical health and strength, but it will surely bring to such the highest blessings which it brought to the poor cripple of this lesson—a knowledge of the Lord and a share of his **spiritual** favors.

At that time, when there was no provision for the indigent and helpless, alms-begging and almsgiving were entirely proper. It is creditable to the civilization of our day and land, however, that the helpless are provided for at public expense—all property paying a poor tax or alms tax. It strikes us as being as much wrong to encourage public begging now, as it was right to respond to it at the time mentioned.

The Apostle said, "Silver and gold have I none." We can scarcely suppose that he intended this statement to be taken literally, for in the preceding verses we have the record that considerable property was sold, and the proceeds laid at the Apostles' feet—put at their disposal. But this evidently the apostles considered as belonging to the Lord and not to themselves—as trust funds. We assume, therefore, that the Apostle meant, Silver and gold we have none to give you, but we have something better to give you, something which God intended we should dispense. And undoubtedly what the Apostles gave was more valuable than money to the poor cripple.

> **If we cannot always give much money, or if we cannot give as much as we would like to give, to those who are in need, we may always, like Peter, give something. We cannot, like him give health and strength miraculously, since we are not endued with those apostolic powers; but we can give a word of encouragement, a kindly look, a helping hand over difficulties; and these will often be more valuable than money, and sometimes more appreciated.**

We notice how distinctly Peter acknowledged the source of his power, and how he was not ashamed of any feature of divine truth. He boldly declared his miracle to be in the name of "Jesus of Nazareth." He plainly declared that it was Jesus the Nazarene, the despised one, whose power had healed. We find some of the Lord's

people today far less courageous than Peter; inclined rather to feel ashamed of the truth and ashamed of the agencies God has used in its dissemination; —for fear that these would be a reflection against it. We should rather follow the Apostle's course, and be very courageous and ready to publicly affirm whatever we find possessing divine sanction. Whatever agencies God may make use of in connection with his service we may be sure that he has some purpose, some object in view, and that his purposes will best be accomplished by plain, candid, truthful statements, like Peter's.

And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.
Acts 3:9-10

The description of standing, leaping and walking, may well represent the first efforts of one who had been born lame, and who consequently had never learned how to walk. However, the strength was in his limbs, and abundantly testified to the miracle wrought. The poor man was not ashamed of the agents whom God had used in his restoration. He shouted praise to God, and held on to his two benefactors, advertising them to the people, and thus advertising also the Gospel message, which they had to give, which undoubtedly was the very purpose the Lord intended. Here, too, is a lesson for us, not to be ashamed of those whom the Lord may use in connection with our spiritual healing—much more valuable, much more to be appreciated and acknowledged before God and men, than any temporal blessing. Indeed, the natural sight, natural hearing, natural walking, and natural enjoyment of every kind, are insignificant in comparison with the spiritual enlightenment and hearing and strength to walk in a spiritual way, as the spiritual joys are higher than the natural.

Peter was not self-seeking; he was alert to use every opportunity, every opening, that might come to himself, to the glory of the Lord and of his cause. And so when the multitude gathered together he used the miracle of healing as his text—as a demonstration of the power of the risen Jesus, operating through him; and he straightway declared to the people that this was the same Jesus whom their rulers had crucified some two months previously.

If Peter did not plan this particular visit and healing, we may reasonably suppose that the holy spirit planned and directed it for him. At all events the whole matter was very successful in that it drew the attention of the most devout, prayerful Jews to the gospel of Christ. R. 2933 and R. 2095

The Lord is become our salvation; he has saved us from the condemnation of sin through faith in the blood; he has rescued us from the love of sin. He has not only revived us, but strengthened us, and enabled us to walk in the narrow way, and to do so with joy and gladness and leaping. He is our salvation already for we are already passed from death unto life, and have the witness of this in the holy spirit. R. 2034

Preaching at Solomon's Porch

Acts 3:11-21

Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed. So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people:



Peter and John Heal a Lame Man at the Temple. Art c. 1886

"Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

"Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."

The Apostle Peter was quick to use any and every opportunity to tell the good tidings. He began by modestly assuring the people that it was nothing wonderful in John and himself that had produced the miracle, and that the man was not cured

either by their holiness or by their power, but by the power of the risen Christ Jesus. It is worthy of note that although in addressing the man Peter exercised his own faith only, yet now in speaking of the matter he associates John with himself as a sharer in whatever honor might belong to them as the instruments of God. How unselfish and how beautiful! What a lesson is in this verse for all who attempt any service for the King of kings. How necessary that we should realize not only our own insufficiency and nothingness in connection with the work of God, but how proper that self should sink entirely out of our thoughts and the glory all be given to Him whose right it is.

> **How bold and fearless Peter here appears since that pentecostal baptism of the holy spirit. There is no disposition now to deny the Lord: he fearlessly stands before the people who only a few months previous had crucified the Lord, and charges them with the crime; describing, too, the enormity of their guilt, and then declaring the fact of his resurrection, of which fact he claimed to be one of the witnesses. And this miracle which had been wrought in their sight, in the name of Jesus, he pointed to as an evidence of his exaltation and power. R. 1421**

While they were yet wondering on the subject, the inspired Apostle quickly drew their attention to the evidences before them in the healing of the cripple, which attested the truth of his declaration that Jesus was no longer dead but risen. Here was just such a miracle as those which he a few months before had performed in their midst. It was another of Jesus' miracles; the apostles themselves performing it in his name and utterly disclaiming any ability to do such things themselves.

Thus pointing them to the fact that Jesus was still a living, powerful, sympathetic and gracious Savior, he urged them to repent, assuring them that it was God's intention to send great blessings through Jesus and to send Jesus himself back again a second time: assuring them also that at his second coming there would be an abundance of such manifestations as these which they had just witnessed, saying, —

Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you whom the heavens must receive [retain] until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began.

Note that the Apostle began by expressing confidence in the "fathers" and in Israel's hope, built upon Jehovah's promise to them. Note also that after connecting those promises and hopes with Christ and his sacrifice, and linking it with the cure of the cripple, he points them down to the Millennial age as the grand consummation-time for all the blessings, all the good things, which God had promised by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began. Is it any wonder that such testimony—both reasonable and comprehensible—delivered to such devout Israelites, drawn together by a desire to worship the Lord, resulted as it did, in the conversion of about five thousand? These were the "wheat" of that Jewish age,

which the Lord was gathering out preparatory to the blinding of all the remainder of that people for the period of the Gospel age, at the close of which their blindness will be turned away. —Rom. 11:25,26.

"For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN. HIM YOU SHALL HEAR IN ALL THINGS, WHATEVER HE SAYS TO YOU. AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERY SOUL WHO WILL NOT HEAR THAT PROPHET SHALL BE UTTERLY DESTROYED FROM AMONG THE PEOPLE.' Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.' To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."
Acts 3:22-26

St. Peter pointed out how Moses had foretold the calling out of a special Messianic class. (Deuteronomy 18:17-19.) Jesus is the Head of this class; and all now received into God's family by the begetting of the Holy Spirit are counted members of the Body of Christ, the Church. Moses was a type of this great Christ, and said to the fathers, "A [greater] Prophet [than I—an antitype] shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from amongst your brethren." (Verse 22.) God raised up Jesus first, says the Apostle; and since Pentecost He has been raising up brethren of Jesus—the Apostles first, then all the saintly characters of these past eighteen hundred years, called according to God's purpose to be the members of the Body of Christ, otherwise styled the Bride class. The full raising up of these will not be accomplished until the resurrection of the Church is completed.

When this great Antitype of Moses (Christ and the Church, His Body) shall have been lifted up, glorified, then will come the time for the blessing of the world, by the opening of the eyes of their understanding and through all the Restitution privileges of that time. During the Millennium, whoever will hear that great Prophet may come into a great blessing of perfection, of restitution]—physically, mentally, morally—and thus to everlasting life.

The sermon that Peter preached that day, accompanied, as it was, by an actual demonstration of the Lord's power to accomplish the great restitution work, must have made a deep impression upon the minds of his hearers. And as we read it today, in the early dawn of the blessed times of restitution, our hearts are made to rejoice also in the glorious prospect; especially since we have come to realize that the special favor which the natural seed of Abraham, except a small remnant, failed to appreciate and accept, we, Gentile believers, being by faith counted as the seed of Abraham, have fallen heirs to. Blessed inheritance! How little poor, prejudice-blinded Israel realized what they were rejecting; and how careful should we be who have been adopted in their stead into the family of God, lest we become blinded by the god of this world to the great value of this favor. R. 2095, R. 5839, R. 1422

The Times of Restitution of All Things

Acts 3:18-21

Those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration*of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

Peter tells us that this restitution is spoken of by the mouth of all the holy prophets. They do all teach it.

All the Apostles similarly pointed backward to the fall from divine favor, and to the cross of Christ as the point of reconciliation as respects divine Justice, and forward to the Millennial age as the time for the blessing of all the world of mankind with opportunities of knowledge and help in their **reconciliation to God**. They all point out the present age as the time for the gathering out of the elect Church to be associates with Messiah (his "royal priesthood" and "peculiar people") to cooperate with him as his "bride," his "body," in the work of conferring upon the world the blessings of restitution secured for them by the sacrifice finished at Calvary.

We are to remember that the blessings which Christ will give to the world during the Millennial age, as the regenerator of the world, are the blessings which he bought for them by the sacrifice of himself. As he gave himself, as "the man Christ Jesus," a corresponding price for the man Adam, upon whom the condemnation came, so it was the manhood, rights, privileges and life and kingdom of Adam that were purchased by the great sacrifice for sins; and these purchased things are the things which are to be restored to the regenerated world, through their regenerator or father, Christ Jesus our Lord, the second Adam.
Eph. 1:14; Acts 3:19-23

God's plan of salvation for the general race of Adam is to extend to each member of it, during the Millennium, the **offer** of **eternal life** upon the terms of the New Covenant sealed for all with the precious blood of the Lamb. But there is no suggestion anywhere that immortality, the Divine Nature, will ever be offered or granted to any except the "elect" Church of the Gospel age—the "little flock," "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." For the others of Adam's race the offer will be "restitution" to life and health and perfection of **human** nature—the same that Adam possessed as the earthly image of God before his fall from grace into sin and death. And when at the close of the Millennial age all the obedient of mankind shall have attained all that was **lost in Adam and redeemed by Christ**—then all, armed with complete knowledge and experience, and hence fully able to stand the test, will be tested severely (as was Adam), but individually (Rev. 20:7-10), and only those found in fullest heart-sympathy, as well as in outward harmony, with God and his righteous arrangements, will be permitted to go beyond the Millennium into the everlasting future or "world [age] without end." All others will be destroyed in the Second Death— "destroyed from among the people." Acts 3:23

*KJV and YLT say "restitution."

The Apostle informs us that Jesus has been absent from earth---in the heaven---during all the intervening time from his ascension to the beginning of the times of restitution, or the Millennial age--- "whom the heaven must retain **until** the times of restitution of all things," etc. (Acts 3:21) Since the Scriptures thus teach that the object of our Lord's second advent is the restitution of all things, and that at the time of his appearing the nations are so far from being converted as to be angry (Rev. 11:18) and in opposition, it must be admitted either that the Church will fail to accomplish her mission, and that the plan of God will be thus far frustrated, or else, as we claim and have shown, that the conversion of the world in the present age was not expected of the Church, but that her mission has been to preach the Gospel in all the world **for a witness**, and to prepare herself under divine direction for her great future work. God has not yet by any means exhausted his power for the world's conversion. Nay, more: he has not yet **even attempted** the world's conversion.

This may seem a strange statement to some, but let such reflect that if God has attempted such a work he has signally failed; for, as we have seen, only a small fraction of earth's billions have ever intelligently heard of the **only name** whereby they must be saved. We have only forcibly stated the views and teachings of some of the leading sects---Baptists, Presbyterians and others---viz., that God is electing or selecting out of the world a "little flock," a Church. They believe that God will do no more than choose this Church, while we find the Scriptures teaching a further step in the divine plan---a RESTITUTION for the world, to be accomplished through the elect Church, when completed and glorified. The "little flock," the overcomers, of this Gospel age, are only the body of "The Seed" in or by whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed.

All believers who are resting by faith in their Redeemer's work---past and to come---may have full assurance of faith that "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath in reservation for those who love him," specially for the Church; but also the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of love and mercy and restitutional blessings, for all those of the non-elect world, who in their Millennial day of grace shall heartily accept the wonderful divine provisions on the divine terms. A108, E24, E221, E402, A95, F50

The more we examine the plan of the ages, the more we will find in it perfect harmony, beauty and order. Each age has its part to accomplish, necessary to the complete development of God's plan as a whole. The plan is a progressive one, gradually unfolding from age to age, upward and onward to the grand consummation of the original design of the Divine Architect, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." (Eph. 1:11) Not one of these great periods is an hour too long or too short for the accomplishment of its object. God is a wise economist of both time and means, though his resources are infinite; and no power, however malicious, for a moment retards or thwarts his purposes. All things, evil as well as good, under divine supervision and overruling, are working together for the accomplishment of his will. A73

The First Persecution Acts 4:1-4

Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. However, many of those who heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

As the apostles were preaching Christ, taking for their text the manifestation of his power through Peter in the healing of the impotent man at the temple gate "Beautiful," and while the devout worshipers heard them gladly and repentantly, the theologians were disturbed; it seemed monstrous to them that any but themselves should undertake to teach the people, and that the people were giving more interested attention to these "laymen" than they gave to them, ---the chief priests, religious rulers and doctors of the law. In this they but manifested the usual worldly spirit, which in every religious system except the true one manifests special opposition to any light or teaching which does not emanate from those recognized as "ordained" teachers. True, these apostles were ordained by the very highest authority in the universe---the spirit and power of God, communicated by Christ; but such ordination, such authority to teach, was not recognized by those doctors of divinity who, like their successors to this day, failed to recognize the ordinations of God and merely recognize human authorizations to preach.

Not only were they envious that others than themselves should have the ear of the people for religious instruction, but they had listened sufficiently to the discourse themselves to ascertain that the apostles were really imparting to the people some knowledge of spiritual things. The people were actually being **taught**, and that upon subjects concerning which they, the recognized doctors of divinity and theology, knew nothing and could teach nothing. If, therefore, such teachings were permitted, the worshipers would very soon know more than their religious rulers, which would never do.

Apparently the preaching and the discussion went on for about two hours, when it was interrupted by the arrest of the apostles, St. Peter and St. John. They were placed under guard for the night, because it was too late for the meeting of the Sanhedrin or Law, which by jurisdiction could try a case only in day time. Who were the accusers? Surely not the man who was healed, nor the common people who witnessed the miracle and gave God glory! Who then? Alas! it was the professedly most religious, most holy, most pious teachers of the people who, beholding what would thus draw away from their own teachings, were angry at the apostles, the more so that it was charged against them publicly that they had really crucified the Messiah a few weeks before.

It would have been possible for the imprisoned men to have viewed their situation from the standpoint of unbelief, and to have said to themselves and each other: God did not approve our work, and hence has permitted us to be thus arrested and imprisoned, and now we know not what the result will be on the morrow, for those who crucified our Lord may crucify us also. Or they might, in unbelief, have reasoned still otherwise, and have said to each other: After all, what right have we to think that God has anything to do with these matters? We are like other men, and have merely found some new way in which natural law operates in the healing of the sick: God evidently is not concerned in this work; for if he were surely he would not have permitted us to come into these straits, while we were seeking to serve him and to declare the good tidings. But we may safely assume that the thoughts and words of the prisoners took a totally different direction. Full of faith, they no doubt said to themselves: We know not in what way the Lord may intend to use this, which seems to be a disadvantage to us, and an interruption to his work; doubtless however, he will use it in some manner to forward his cause and to reach more of his people with the truth.

As a matter of fact, the Lord evidently intended through this seeming calamity to bring to the apostles a still grander opportunity of testifying to the truth on the next day—of preaching to a class which they might never again have opportunity to reach—the priestly class, the ruling class, represented in the Sanhedrin, and those who would gather at its sessions. When the Sanhedrin Court opened the next morning, amongst its seventy members, representatives of the most influential classes in Jerusalem, were Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas, his son, both of whom had about two months previously presided in the trial of the Master himself.

Nevertheless, the apostles were evidently not at all dismayed by the dignity of the Court—the Lord evidently fulfilling to them his promise,

You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak, for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.
Matthew 10:18-20

That Peter, as spokesman was supernaturally
assisted, is implied in the narrative.
"He was filled with the holy spirit."
R. 2096, R. 4316, R. 2939

No Other Name Under Heaven Acts 4:5-12

And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED BY YOU BUILDERS, WHICH HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE.'

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Has it not been always so—that the persecutors of the Truth have been those who had greatest reason to be its servants? The scene here opens with the account of the trial of the apostles before the Sanhedrin Court. Caiaphas, the very one who condemned Jesus, was present, as were other ecclesiastics. If the apostles wondered that the Lord had permitted them to be stopped in their preaching and be imprisoned for the night, they probably saw when they were before the Sanhedrin the good reason for it all. God thus provided that the most learned, the most influential, red-handed with the blood of Jesus, should be brought face to face with the truth of the same.

As the apostles answered the questions propounded, these clerics must have perceived that the Spirit of Christ in his followers was still able, not only to perform miracles, but to endow those humble fishermen with eloquence and courage to fully defend their position and voice the Truth. Let us learn this lesson—to look through all of life's experiences for the accomplishment of the Divine purposes. When we become discouraged with trials or difficulties, yet know that we are faithfully serving the Lord and in line with the teachings of his Word, we should have faith to believe that the end of his dealings with us will fully justify every trial and difficulty between.

By what power or by what name have you done this?

There was no disputing the fact that the lame man, known for years to all the frequenters of the temple, had been healed. He had been seen jumping, walking and praising God. By their questions these clerics would give the inference that they believed the curing work had been accomplished by Satanic power. The trial was evidently to be conducted along this line—to prove the apostles emissaries of Satan. But the blessing upon St. Peter was in full harmony with the promise that when he would be called upon to stand before magistrates and princes, language would be given him. From his lips poured forth such a stream of argument as quite overwhelmed his questioners. He told them in whose name his miracles had been performed—in the name of the one whom they had crucified some months before. He told them in the name of whose power he had wrought the miracles, namely, the power of God.

He properly made no apologies for his Master, nor for his having been numbered with the wicked. He charged straight home the responsibility of his death upon them, and then quoted them from the prophecies,

This is the stone which was set at naught by the builders, which is become the head of the corner. Acts 4:11 (KJV)

Neither was there salvation in any other than the one that they had crucified as a criminal. Astounding boldness, courage, ability! No wonder we read that they marveled at the boldness and the courage of these apostles, who they perceived were unlearned and ignorant men! No wonder that they took knowledge that these had been with Jesus and learned of him!

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. Acts 4:13

They soon stopped the speaker. They were not anxious to have matters thoroughly opened up. They had heard enough. They stood them aside until they had conferred. What they were afraid of was the spreading of the thing. It was not with them a question of right or wrong, of truth or falsity, of God or Satan, but the matter of the spread of religious views which would nullify their influence. R. 4316

The same principle still holds good. Whoever the Lord may use as his mouthpiece will be endowed with corresponding ability to render the service for which the Lord has called, if he abide faithful, as did the apostles. We need not fear the attitude of the opponents, whether in high or low positions, if we are the Lord's, devoted to his cause. "He who is for us is more than all they that be against us." Why should we not have courage? Notice, nevertheless, that while the Apostle manifested such courage in speaking of the Truth, there was nothing proud, domineering or boastful or slanderous in his utterances. He told the Truth in a simple manner. Let our course be similar. R. 4316

They Had Been With Jesus

Acts 4:13-16

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

Ah, yes! of Jesus also some one had said, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" —in any of our schools. (John 7:15.) They knew of His power with the people through the Spirit of the Lord and of His straight-forward presentation of the Truth. They recognized these men as of the same character—filled with Jesus' Spirit. And to this day this is true of the followers of Jesus. As the Apostle wrote, "God hath not given unto us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7.) All of the Lord's people should remember this point and should cultivate such a spirit and be copies of the Lord Jesus and of the faithful Apostles, so that of all such people might take knowledge that they have been with Jesus and have learned of Him.

But let no one forget that there is only one way of coming into relationship with God—through the Lord Jesus Christ. As the Apostle indicates in this discourse, "There is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." We must have faith in Jesus. We must understand that He died for the sin of the world. We must make a personal acceptance of Him as our Savior. We must consecrate our little all to follow in His steps faithfully, even unto death. On these conditions we become His disciples; and having become disciples, learners in the School of Christ, and having been begotten of the Holy Spirit, we are privileged to show forth more and more His praises and to let our light shine before men, that they, seeing our good works and our likeness to the Master, may glorify God on our behalf.

The Sanhedrin were perplexed as they perceived that the disciples had so strong a case, and had really turned the tables upon them, charging them before the people with being the real culprits—murderers of the Son of God, the Messiah. As they looked at the man who had been healed, they perceived a great miracle. They could say nothing. So they put forth the Apostles from their midst, that they might discuss the case privately. They could not deny the miracle, and they were afraid of what it might lead to if talk of this kind about Jesus and about their being His murderers should spread amongst the people to any degree. They thought best to let the

disciples go, charging them, threatening them, not to preach any more in the name of Jesus.

"But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name." So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.
Acts 4:17-18

When recalled before the Sanhedrin and told that the decision was that they should be discharged, but that they should be cautioned, warned, threatened, that they should not preach any more in the name of Jesus, the apostles modestly, courteously, but very boldly said,

Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.
Acts 4:19-20

How very proper this reply! Yet how much courage it must have required for men without any education and without much wisdom to have to stand before magistrates and those of high estate! Why could they not refrain from preaching! Why would not the apostle's words apply to them, "Be subject to the powers that be." The answer is that while we are to be subject to earthly powers, as respects earthly things, we have a still higher responsibility in respect to the spiritual, the heavenly things. Our heavenly Father prepared the way for the Gospel by the sending of his Son. And our Lord said to his apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." —-Mark 16:15.

So long, therefore, as the apostles could reasonably, properly find hearers for their Master's Word, they preached it. And so it must be with us. We must not be intimidated. While obedient to the powers that be respecting every earthly way, we, like the apostles, cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.
R. 5840 and R. 4317

So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.
Acts 4:21

A Prayer for Boldness

Acts 4:23-31

And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said:

"Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:

'WHY DID THE NATIONS RAGE, AND THE PEOPLE PLOT VAIN THINGS? THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.'

For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.



The early church prays for boldness

What a sweet, Christlike spirit was manifested in this prayer. Mark the love and harmony and sympathy among the brethren; the love and zeal for the truth which was evidently paramount to every other consideration, their gratitude and humble recognition of the divine favor, and the realization of their own weakness and desire for more and more of the power from on high and for special aid to enable them to endure hardness as good soldiers of the cross. Such is the proper attitude of the Church at all times; and such a spirit and such a prayer are sure to bring to the Church now as well as then the same answer of peace and joy.

God had commanded the disciples through Jesus that they should be God's mouthpieces to preach the Gospel Message that the death of Jesus was efficacious for the cancellation of sins; and that He who was slain was by and by to come and set up His Kingdom, and to bless the world by releasing it from the bondage of sin and death. They were also to invite all who had faith to believe this Message to associate themselves as disciples of Jesus, loyal and faithful to the Prince of that Kingdom which is not yet set up. By such faithfulness they would manifest the faith that was in them and their loyalty to God; and on account of this they were promised a share with Messiah in the Kingdom which He would establish.

It was therefore the duty of the Apostles, as it is the duty of all the followers of Jesus, to make known the Gospel Message wherever there are hearing ears, and not to fear what man may do—although it would be our duty not to offend against the laws by holding a meeting where the crowds would interfere with traffic, or otherwise be in conflict with legal regulations. The Apostles were not interfering with the regulations of the Jewish Law in speaking in public, as they did in the Temple. Their courage was really authorized by the Law; and the Sanhedrin, in forbidding them, went beyond its bounds.

The Church, young in faith, had no doubt been greatly distressed by the imprisonment of the leading disciples; and when they were released, then a general meeting for rejoicing and praise to God was held, thanking the Lord for the courage given to the Apostles, for the promises of His Word, and for the miracle which had led up to all this. As a consequence, we read that they were all filled with the holy spirit, and they went forth from that place of prayer and spoke the Word of God with boldness. The place also where they were was shaken while the blessing of the spirit came upon them. This, like the gifts that were then given, was evidently to supply what was then needed—an aid to their faith—in an hour of trial just at the beginning of their great work. R. 1425 and R. 5840

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul. Neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.
Acts 4:32-33

Ananias and Sapphira

Acts 4:34-37; 5:1-11

Nor was there anyone among them who lacked, for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet, and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said,
"Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.

Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her,
"Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?"

She said,
"Yes, for so much."

Then Peter said to her,
"How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."

Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

The lesson of this sad narrative is one of special warning to the whole Church. It is the only case in the Church on record where the penalty of willful violation of a covenant with God met with summary punishment. Many since that day have doubtless similarly violated their covenant and no such results followed. With great boldness many have not only done so, but they have gone still farther and made merchandise of the interests of the truth; and still judgment tarries. Nevertheless, the Lord's eye is upon every one of the consecrated household, and no inequality will be seen in his dealings when his work is completed.

We have seen from the preceding lessons that the Lord's dealings with the early Church were peculiarly adapted to the needs of the inception of so great a cause, and different from his dealings after the Church had been fairly set upon her course for the prize of her high calling. The particular lesson which the Lord in this case desired to impress upon the whole Church from then till now was the solemn obligation involved in our covenant with him of entire consecration to his service.

Our thought is that these two culprits were not really God's children---that they had never received the begetting of the Holy Spirit; and that the Lord took this opportunity to give a great lesson to the Church---to remind them that they were dealing, not with flesh and blood, but with Jehovah God. From this viewpoint, it was worth while to sacrifice these two persons under Divine judgment with a view to teaching the Church, then and in future generations, how displeasing in the Lord's sight is hypocrisy---especially in respect to religious things.

If these two had been spirit-begotten, then their punishment would be the Second Death; and we would have no Scriptural ground for expecting them to have any resurrection or future consideration from the Lord. But if they were merely children of this world, not fully appreciative of spiritual things, their future interests are not destroyed. They still belong to the great world of mankind for whom Christ died, and have not yet received in full the blessings of reconciliation with God through the Lord Jesus.

The designed effect was realized. Great fear and respect for God and everything appertaining to Him in religion fell upon the whole multitude. It was worth while to punish the one couple severely, in view of the preparation made for their blessing in the future and in view of the lesson which their experience brought to the remainder of the Church.

We are not gifted, as was St. Peter, with authority to represent the Lord's interests in judging others. It would appear, however, from all that we are able to know, that there are many today living equally deceptive lives. We are not permitted to judge them, but they judge themselves by what they tell us. They profess to be consecrated to the Lord ---Jehovah---sacrificed to the Divine cause. Nevertheless they keep back much through self-will, professing to be fully devoted followers of Jesus.

This is an individual matter still, as it was in the days of the apostles. Each individual of the Lord's people must answer for his own course, to the Lord himself. It therefore behooves all those who are seeking divine approval to see to it that they are not influenced by the prevalent disposition to hypocrisy, but that they deal with the Lord in purity and honesty of heart. R. 1426, R. 5850, R. 2944

Imprisoned Once Again

Acts 5:12-18

And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.

The phenomenal success of the gospel under the apostles' preaching, in the power of the holy spirit, soon awakened bitter opposition on the part of the rulers of the Jews. In a previous lesson we saw that they did not hesitate to put the apostles in prison; and how they sought to convict them of crime for healing the lame man, in the name of Jesus. Their opposition, instead of dying out, increased as they perceived the wonderful strides of progress made by the new doctrine. They felt compelled to make another attempt to head off what they considered the heresy of the Nazarene.

The two principal sects amongst the Jews at this time were the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The Pharisees made loud professions of "holiness," and did much in the way of outward display, which our Lord, who could read the heart, declared was hypocrisy; while

The Sadducees, better educated as a class and less orthodox, were more after the sort called "higher critics" today; or even beyond them, they might be termed to some extent agnostic, —their faith considerably resembling that of the "Reformed Jews" of today. They believed something of the divine promises, but expected them to be fulfilled in a partial manner and in a natural way. They evidently did not expect a supernatural Messiah. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They denied that there are angels or any spirit beings not visible to flesh and blood.

The chief priest at this time, we are told by the lesson, belonged to this party. He and his sect were filled with indignation against the new doctrine, for in every sense of the word it specially opposed their teaching—much more so than it opposed Phariseeism.

The expression, "the high priest rose up," does not signify that he had been sitting or lying down and merely stood upon his feet, but might more properly be translated "the high priest was **aroused**." He and his party, the Sadducees, had hitherto been content to very generally disdain the masses and their views, and to pay little attention to them as inferior in wisdom and judgment on such questions. But now seeing the interest being taken by the public in the apostles' preaching, which declared not only the resurrection of our Lord, but that through the merit of his sacrifice a resurrection to a future life would be provided for all, they were thoroughly "aroused." In the teachings of the apostles they were meeting with a logic which they had never encountered in arguing with the Pharisees. Accordingly they again sent and laid violent hands upon the apostles and put them into prison.



Annas and Caiaphas by James Tissot, 1886-1894

Josephus informs us that most of the upper class of his day were skeptics, Sadducees, though the mass of the people were Pharisees. It will thus be seen that there is a close correspondency between the ecclesiastical conditions in the end of the Jewish Age and those which now prevail in the end of this age. Today, both in pulpit and pew, the more learned from a human standpoint have very slight belief in anything beyond the present life. Their faith has gradually given way under the attacks of Higher Critics and Evolution, because already undermined by the errors of the dark ages, prominently the teaching that nearly everybody is enroute to eternal torment, either because of Divine inability to prevent it or because of Divine foreordination to that effect.

The teachings of the apostles reflected specially against the Sadducees, because the basis of it was the declaration that Christ had risen from the dead; and secondly, because this very high priest and his associates had been leaders in the conspiracy which led to our Lord's crucifixion. Our text says that they were "filled with indignation" (revised version, "jealousy.") The Greek word seems to signify that they were hot with indignation, and anxious to have them convicted before the Sanhedrin and disposed of. Under these circumstances they were sent to prison.
R. 2103 and R. 4325

Freed By An Angel

Acts 5:19-25

But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said,
"Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.



But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, saying,
"Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside!"

Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be. So one came and told them, saying,
"Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"

During the night, the angel of the Lord led them forth miraculously while the keepers of the prison slept, and bade them go to the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life. Thus did God intersperse evidences of his Divine care and protection with other experiences which seem to be contrary, and thus were the apostles and the early Church and we, who read the account, strengthened and encouraged to have good confidence in the Lord; that greater is he who is on our part than all they that be against us, and that even the adverse experiences are of Divine permission. As our Lord said to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were permitted of my Father."

Note the expression of the angel's message (v. 20), **"All the words of this life."** There is a sermon for us in those few words. They remind us that our message consists of "wonderful words of life" —-life from the dead, secured for us and ultimately for all, through the death of the Redeemer, and through his resurrection, and to be actually brought to us and to all at his second advent. The words remind us also that we who believe do now, by faith, enter into this newness of life—-the resurrection life, in a figurative sense, and that our resurrection, our life, if we are faithful, will come to us as our final "change," in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

Obedient to God's message, the apostles went early to the temple, and began, as before, to teach the people, to explain to them the Old Testament Scriptures and types, which foretold that Messiah should first suffer before he would enter into his glory, and they identified him as the Messiah. They explained his sacrificial death, his resurrection and his sending forth upon believers his holy Spirit, and that this also was foretold in the prophecies. They pointed out that the Gospel message was for the selection of the faithful "Israelites indeed" to be Messiah's Bride and Joint-Heir in his Kingdom later to be established for the blessing of Israel and all the nations of the world. This message still has an attraction for the common people, and would have also for the more educated had not their philosophies and traditions turned their hearts away from the simplicity of faith in the Lord's Second Coming and Kingdom to a belief that they themselves, without the Lord, are to convert the world—-by which they mean civilization.

Meantime the Sanhedrin, or senate, met at the appointed hour, but the officers sent to bring the prisoners found them not—-though the prison was every way secured —-until it was learned that they were teaching in the temple and evidently having considerable influence with the people; so the officers wisely arrested them quietly, for fear they should create an uproar and be themselves the sufferers. R. 4325

Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned.
Acts 5:26

On Trial Once Again

Acts 5:27-32

When they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying,
"Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

But Peter and the other apostles answered and said:

"We ought to obey God rather than men."

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

How angered were the Sadducees and the official class at that time! They were grieved that the people were taught; for the teachings of the followers of Jesus were so contrary to what they had taught and what they had hoped for.

Not believing the Prophets, they had been using religion largely as a cloak–– "a form of godliness." Their real hopes were along the line of Gentile hopes––of becoming more intimately associated with the Roman Empire and thus obtaining special favor. They feared lest the teaching of Messiah as the coming King of the world would reach the ears of the Roman rulers and bring upon the Jews ridicule and disfavor, and perhaps take from them some of the liberties which they were enjoying, and crush all their aspirations respecting the future. Their opposition to the Gospel was therefore entirely selfish.

They had the Apostles arrested and put into prison for preaching. But the Lord sent His angel and delivered His faithful servants; and they, with good courage, appeared again the next day in the Temple, preaching to the people as before. Again they were arrested, brought before the officials and commanded to preach no more in this Name. The point of the official resentment is noted in their words, "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrines [teachings], and are liable to bring this man's blood upon us." That is to say, It looks as though you might really convince the people of this city that we have committed a great crime in putting to death that fanatical leader of yours called Jesus.

But the more they sought to oppose the Message, the more God blessed it; the more the common people received the Truth; the more the Church of Christ multiplied.

Thus, inquiring of the apostles if they were not violating strict orders already given them respecting preaching in the name of the Crucified One, they claimed that he had risen from the dead; that he was Messiah, etc. Not waiting for an answer, the high priest proceeded to show the Sanhedrin the logical effect of their being permitted to continue this teaching—they were filling Jerusalem with their teaching, bringing upon them (the high priest and the Sanhedrin, which had condemned Jesus) this man's blood—that is to say, responsibility for his unjust death. This shows that they appreciated the position, and that the apostles also appreciated it and had told the truth on the subject unsparingly.

The answer of the Apostle Peter and others is given in brief form, but is a model answer in every sense of the word. Not rudely, yet forcefully and logically, they set forth seven points:

1. **That, uncontrovertibly, where the command of God and the command of men conflict, the Divine authority must be recognized as supreme.**

2. **That they were loyal to the God of their fathers, whose power in the resurrection of Jesus was being attested.**

3. **That it was true that Jewish rulers were responsible for Jesus' death.**

4. **That God has honored him, raised him from the dead and taken him to heaven.**

5. **That he was the Prince and Saviour of Divine appointment.**

6. **That they were not preaching vengeance, but mercy—not penalty for the crucifixion, but forgiveness of sins to all Israel, on condition of repentance.**

7. **That they personally were witnesses, and that the power of the holy Spirit in them and in all believers corroborated these facts.**

This is a wonderful testimony, and no doubt the experiences of the apostles in being delivered from the prison on the previous night helped to give them the courage so necessary at this moment. No doubt also the knowledge of that incident, coming to Gamaliel, led him to offer the moderate advice which the Sanhedrin followed. He advised them,

Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing, but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God.
Acts 5:35, 38-39

R. 5851 and R. 4325

Suffering for Christ

Acts 5:40-42

And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

The result was that the apostles were again charged not to preach in the name of Jesus, and, by way of showing the authority of the Court, it was ordered that they be whipped, scourged. The apostles, realizing the power of the Lord, endured the chastening with thanksgiving that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus. Thus the Lord blessed them in their hearts with his peace and grace, while he did not shield them from the scourging. In this, also, we learn a lesson respecting Divine providences.

"Through much tribulation shall ye enter the Kingdom." This is not because Divine power is not able to shield us from the tribulations, nor because our Lord is not interested in our welfare, but, quite the contrary, because, according to Divine tests placed upon the Church, the New Nature can be developed, educated, crystallized, only through the tests and trials it will endure through its earthly members in the flesh, through loyalty to the Lord. These testings will come along various lines —faith, obedience, endurance, love, etc. And it is only to the overcomers that the reward is promised. But, thank God, grace to help in time of need is promised us. If our hearts are loyal and we do our best, the Lord will see to the remainder.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Matthew 5:10

This text reminds us that we are to expect persecution, and Bible history shows us that these are to be expected from the church, as much or more than from the world. Indeed, when our Lord speaks of the world, he evidently refers to "Churchianity." He says,

If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.
If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you
are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world,
therefore the world hates you.
John 15:18-19

The world that hated Jesus and crucified him was the Jewish world, or nominal Israel; and the world from which we may look for persecution, similarly, would be the so-called Christian world—Christendom.

Not only so, but sometimes the persecution comes from those who once were brethren in the Truth—those who once dipped with us in the dish of Divine nourishments at the table of the Lord. The trial is all the more severe when it comes from this quarter. Yet was it not so with our Lord, and does it not seem to have cut him to the quick that Judas kissed him at the very moment that he betrayed him?

But as none of these things moved the Master away from confidence in the Divine providence shaping affairs in the interest of the Church, and as he returned not railing for railing, neither must we. And such experiences rightly received will no doubt make us more and more copies of his dear Son.

Our Lord declares that the blessing for persecution endured is for righteousness' sake, and the Apostle, in line with this, declared, "Let none of you suffer for evil-doing, nor as a busybody in other men's matters." This, of course, will not hinder us from being misrepresented and charged with evil-doing, even as our Lord himself was so charged. Was he not crucified under the charge of blasphemy, which, in his day, was esteemed to be the worst of all offenses? Similarly in our day we must not think it strange if the Adversary shall seek to misrepresent the facts and put light for darkness and darkness for light.

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you, but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.
1 Peter 4:12-13

It is for each of us to preserve a conscience void of offense towards God and men, that, like the Apostle of old, we may be able to call upon all men everywhere to witness whether or not we have coveted their silver or their gold, or done aught to their injury, or left undone any good toward them that was within our power.

In this connection let us remember also that the decision in each of our cases is with God. As St. Paul declares,

With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this,
but He who judges me is the Lord.
1 Corinthians 4:3-4

R. 4326

Simon the Sorcerer Acts 8:9-24

There was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying,
"This man is the great power of God."

And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed, and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.

Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying,
"Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

But Peter said to him,
"Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."

Then Simon answered and said,
"Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me."

The truth reached the Samaritans just in time to rescue them from some of Satan's wily arts, known at that time as "Black Art," etc., practiced by Simon Magus, the sorcerer. The record is, that his influence with the people had been great, both with rich and poor; and that they recognized him as possessed of "the great power of God." Times have changed since then; sorcery and magic no longer captivate the world to the same extent, and the great deceiver has changed his tactics with the times. As the Apostle declares, he assumes a garment of light, and presents himself as a messenger of light, for the deception of those who are seeking the truth.

The Samaritans were ripe for the gospel, and the fact that the Jews had disdained them much as they did the Gentiles no doubt made them all the more ready to receive the gospel message. The fact that Philip now came into Samaria, under the leading of divine providence, and preached the gospel there, signifies that the time had come for the gospel to be extended beyond Judaism. It implies, therefore, that this incident occurred at least three and a half years after our Lord's death—– after the close of the seventieth symbolical week, and the full end of Israel's special favor as respects the gospel invitation of this age. Evidently the apostles had less strenuous feelings of opposition against the Samaritans than against Gentiles in general, because they were of mixed Jewish blood.

The early Church recognized, as we do, that the important matter is that believers should be **joined to Christ**, and that their names, on this account, should be "written in heaven." Simon, who had previously been the religious leader of the people—– their leader into darkness, into the wiles of the Adversary, —–became one of Philip's converts, one of those immersed, and a constant attendant upon Philip's ministry, beholding with amazement the power of God operating through him, which power he recognized as being superior to the power of Satan which had operated in himself.

Deacon Philip was not the Apostle Philip, and hence was unable to confer the gifts of the holy Spirit upon others, which was an Apostolic privilege exclusively. He therefore sent to Jerusalem, and forthwith Peter and John went to Samaria and laid their hands upon the believers, and imparted to them the miraculous gifts which were a part of the Lord's provision for the Church at that time. Not only for the convincing of outsiders, but also for the uplifting of each other in their meetings, the gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues were given, serving practically as instead of the written Word of God.

When the apostles arrived they prayed with the disciples, and then laid their hands upon them, communicating some of the gifts, —–power to speak with tongues, to interpret tongues, to perform miracles, etc. As Simon Magus was one of the believers, one of the baptized ones, he, with the rest, undoubtedly received some gift of the holy spirit. Yet he, and quite probably others of the number, were not in full harmony with the Lord and his gracious plans. The **gifts** of the spirit might be imparted instantaneously; but the **fruits** of the spirit could only be had by growth. Those gifts, therefore, are not to be esteemed as being such good evidence of the

divine favor, and nearness to the Lord, as are the fruits of the spirit, which all of the Lord's consecrated people of today should possess in some degree, —meekness, patience, gentleness, brotherly kindness, love. The Apostle Paul declares that if he had not merely one of those gifts, but all of them, yet lacked love, it would profit him nothing, eventually, as respects the great favor to which the Lord has called his Church. —1 Cor. 13:1-8.

Simon Magus, while astonished with what he had seen, and interested from that standpoint, and convinced that the power was a holy one; and although he had cast in his lot with the believers, and received a gift, —was still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity," as the Apostle Peter subsequently told him. He was thus all the time, but neither recognized the fact himself, nor did the others recognize it. It was then that his interest in the matters under consideration led him to the point of asking Peter to give him the apostolic power of communicating gifts; promising him in return a good compensation in money; —thus showing that he was not interested in the truth and its service from the right standpoint; —that his was merely a curiosity interest, and that selfishness had not given place to love; that he would like to have this apostolic power so that he could use it in a selfish way, for his own aggrandizement, and for his own advantage amongst the people.

There have been many of this same disposition since. They are not necessarily worse men than many others in the world, because they give evidence that they have neither part nor lot with the Lord's people. It is safe to say that there are hundreds of thousands, yes, millions, of the Simon Magus class in the nominal churches of today; men and women who have never discerned the real spirit of the gospel; but who look at its various arrangements from a mercenary point of view, considering what shall be the gain or loss, the advantage or disadvantage, of their relationship thereto; —and maintaining the relationship because of the honor or social position or worldly prosperity which it has brought them, or is bringing them, or which they hope yet to obtain through it. To all such we would like to say, kindly but firmly,

Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter.

We would not say, nor did Peter say to Simon, Your day of grace is past, and you shall be eternally tormented. What God may have for such in the future, under different conditions, we may or may not see clearly; but the point which we are now noting is that such characters have no share in the **Kingdom**; neither in its present, nor in its future development. Even amongst those who have received present truth, we have reason to fear that some have received it, not in the love of **it**, but merely in a spirit of curiosity; or with a view to having something which they can use as a means for bringing themselves into some place of prominence amongst the brethren. Such persons are dangerous characters—dangerous as respects themselves, and dangerous as respects their influence in the Church. Such should be carefully avoided in the selection of leaders amongst the Lord's people, no matter what their natural gifts, riches, or talents may be. R. 2960 and R. 4329

The Church at Peace

Acts 9:31

Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

The persecution which scattered the disciples from Jerusalem throughout all Judea, and of which Paul was one of the leaders, subsided shortly after his conversion; and was followed by a period of rest, recuperation, edification. Paul's conversion may have had something to do with this, but in all probability a trouble which arose about this time between the Jews and their Roman rulers had more to do with it:

About the year A.D. 38 the Emperor, Caligula Caesar, who had but recently come into his office, promulgated an order that his statue should be set up in various quarters of the empire, and should be worshipped. When the Jews learned of this order, and that it was the intention to put these statues in Jerusalem, and even in the Temple itself, as well as elsewhere, their indignation and trouble knew no bounds. They gathered in great masses, young and old, to entreat the local governor to intercede for them that such a desecration of their holy temple and holy city and holy land should not be permitted. Speaking of one of these protest-gatherings, the historian says: "A vast throng, arranged in six columns of (1) old women, (2) matrons, (3) maids, (4) old men, (5) men in their strength, and (6) boys, gathered before the palace of the procurator, and threw themselves on the earth, with wild and piteous cries of despair, when he showed himself on the balcony. They declared they would die, but never give way. Petronius [the governor] made every effort to have the Emperor change the edict, but the most he could arrange was a command to leave the Temple untouched. But many altars were raised to the Emperor outside of its gates; and news came that all the synagogues in Alexandria had been turned into temples to Caesar. These things lasted till January, A.D. 41, on the 24th day of which Caligula was murdered."

It is not surprising that such outside persecution and interference with their own religious rites and liberties caused the Jews to relax their persecutions of the Christians, and thus brought about the period of rest mentioned. Persecutors never like persecution for themselves. Those who have the mind of Christ are never persecutors; they feel it to be their bounden duty not to cooperate, not to assist, things which they believe to be wrong; they may even find it necessary or expedient to denounce the wrong, and to show up its inconsistencies; and in some instances to name the active agents in these wrong teachings and wrong doings—as the apostles have done on several occasions in their writings. But as for persecuting others, the Lord's people can take no part.

The record says that the churches were edified. This word **edified** carries in it the thought of construction or building. We get the thought, therefore, that this time of peace was a time of upbuilding amongst the little groups of the Lord's people in Palestine. There is a two-fold sense in which the Church may be built up or edified—in numbers, and also in the graces of the spirit. Apparently the infant Church was edified both ways. It was growing in numbers, and growing in grace. That the latter is included is shown by the following declaration, that the believers walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the holy spirit. R. 2986

The Saints at Lydda

Acts 9:32-35

Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. And Peter said to him,
"Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed."

Then he arose immediately. So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

We see from this narrative that although the Apostles made Jerusalem the headquarters for their work they, nevertheless, went hither and thither throughout Judea, meeting with the Lord's people scattered by the previous persecution, etc., and forming **nuclei** of little congregations in every direction. In these travels Peter came to Lydda, the chief city in the Plain of Sharon (Saron), about midway between Jerusalem and Joppa—about ten miles from each; and his special mission, we are told, was the visiting of the saints. We like this word "saints." It signifies holy, set apart, sanctified believers in Christ. There is much opposition to the use of the word today, attributable, we believe, to [three] reasons:

- One is that the vast majority of professing Christians know that they are not saints, not sanctified, not living as near to the Lord as they could live, —not separate, even in heart, from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Such persons have strong reasons for disliking the word "saints," realizing that it would exclude them and nearly all of their friends and special associates in Christian work.
- Another reason for opposition to the word "saints" is that in the dark ages it became the custom for the Roman and Greek Catholic churches to "canonize," or legally set apart as objects of reverence, certain persons respecting whom, after several centuries had elapsed, nothing specially evil was remembered, but only things esteemed as honorable and praiseworthy. The word, saints, thus became separated from living Christians; and, indeed, this may have been because there were few Christians really so "alive toward God" as to be representatives of saintship.
- Another reason why some dislike this term, "saints," is that they consider it to be rather boastful, —some would even say hypocritical; because having lost sight of "justification by faith" in its proper application they have become accustomed to think of and to pray for **all** Christians as "miserable sinners" —overlooking the fact that there are some in whom "the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled," because "walking not **after** the flesh, but **after** the spirit," the merit of Christ covers all their unwilling shortcomings. —Rom. 8:4.

The Lord's people, however, are to remember to apply and take pleasure in all the names and practices authorized by apostolic usage; and the term "saint" certainly

thus approves itself to us. Almost all of the epistles of the New Testament are addressed to the saints; and those who can not properly apply the term to themselves can not properly apply to themselves the exceeding great and precious promises contained in those epistles, —for all the promises are addressed to and meant for the saints—the sanctified in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:9; Eph. 1:1)

Let it be borne in mind that the word "saint" does not signify actual perfection, merely, as in our Lord's case, but also those **reckoned** holy through him; and that the apostles who were saints, and who classed themselves with the saints of God, declared respecting themselves,

We also are men of like passions with you.
Acts 14:15

The term saints, then, properly applied in the Church refers to those who although originally "children of wrath, even as others," have been rescued from that condition of condemnation, and been washed, cleansed, and thus brought into accord with God through the forgiveness of their sins and the covering of their weaknesses and blemishes; and who, in connection with these blessings of God, and in appreciation of them, became the "sanctified in Christ Jesus" by making full consecration of themselves to live, not perfect lives (an impossibility), but as nearly perfect as they may be able; —the Lord's grace making them continually "holy, acceptable to God" the Father, through the merit of Christ Jesus. Let us not be ashamed of this name, "saints": if it present before our minds saintship, holiness, separateness from the world, that is just the very thought which should be there continually. It is a thought which will help us, and enable us the better to live separate from the world, as our Master indicated, saying, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." —John 17:16.

Jesus Christ maketh thee whole. (KJV)

These are Peter's words to Aeneas, the paralytic, whom the Apostle found at Lydda and healed. We are not told that he was one of the saints; the presumption, therefore, is that he was not, but that at most he was a friend to some of them, and that thus the Apostle's attention was drawn to him. The fact that he had been bedfast, helpless, eight years, testified that the healing was a miracle. Its fame spread abroad, and resulted, we are told, in the drawing of many unto the Lord and to the Church. Thus did the Lord establish the Church and attract to it those who were in the right attitude of heart, using miracles then, as he now uses other means. Those miracles, as already pointed out, can not have lasted much longer than the apostles themselves; the gifts of healing, etc., being granted only through the laying on of the hands of the apostles—and the twelve had no successors. R. 2987

Dorcas Restored to Life Acts 9:36-42

At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. Then Peter arose and went with them.

When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said,
"Tabitha, arise."

And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.

One of the disciples, that is, one of the saints, residing at Joppa, on the seacoast, was apparently a woman of means and education, and if her name represented her appearance, she was very beautiful. Tabitha, in the Syriac language, Dorcas, in the Greek, signifies graceful, beautiful. But this woman was famed for a beauty and a grace entirely separate and distinct from whatever she possessed of these qualities naturally. Hers was the beauty of a meek and quiet spirit, full of love and helpfulness. She was a burning and a shining light for the Lord in that vicinity, evidently.

She helped the poor, and particularly widows, who as a class at that time were apt to be in a very trying position, especially if poor. Dorcas had been in the **habit** (the Greek text indicates) of assisting the poor with garments, etc., probably, almost certainly, assisting them also with words of encouragement and helpfulness, and ministering to them the truth. Under these circumstances it is not strange that her death should have produced sorrow, especially amongst the beneficiaries of her charities, and amongst the numerous friends which a beautiful Christ-like spirit of this kind is sure to make.

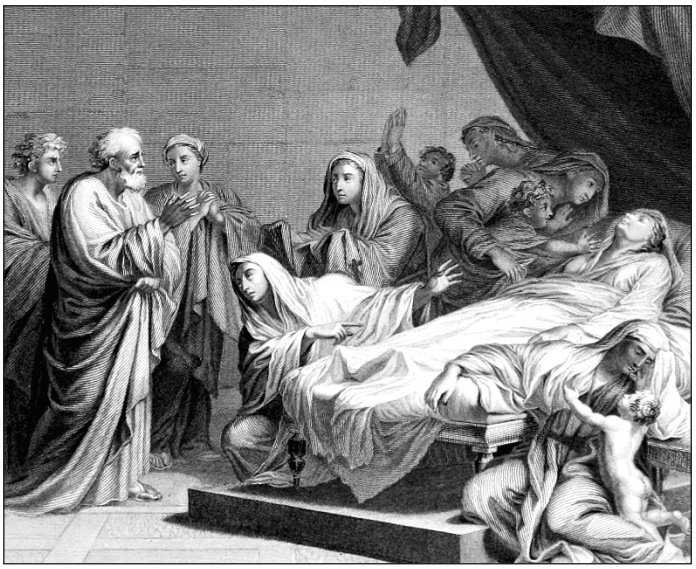
Everyone of the Lord's saints should be recognized in his neighborhood as of generous heart, of kindly impulses; whether he have dollars to give, or only pennies. Of kind words at least he should be noted as a giver, remembering that it is more blessed, and more God-like, to give than to receive. And those who lack the

wherewithal for generosity in this world's goods, so that they have nothing wherewith to minister in a temporal way, to the necessities of the saints or others, are not to forget that they have the still more precious, more valuable, more helpful, more cheering, consolations of the spirit of the truth, and kindness to dispense to such as are in any need. Would that all of the Lord's people would cultivate these Dorcas qualities, and thus become more and more beautiful and graceful in the eyes of their Lord, as well as in the eyes of the world!

Apparently Dorcas took sick and died suddenly, at about the time that others of the saints at Joppa heard of Peter's being at Lydda and the cure performed there. They sent for him immediately; probably with no thought of his performing such a miracle as to bring Dorcas back to life; but rather with the thought that they had lost a highly esteemed member of their little group, and that Peter could give them some consolation at this time.

Today, as the traveler passes from Joppa, going toward Jerusalem, the guide shows him on the outskirts of Joppa, at the side of the public road, a large, and at one time very beautiful and costly, monument to Dorcas. It is a fountain at which many weary ones have refreshed themselves. The narrative of Dorcas' good works and Christ-likeness, like the waters of a fountain, have come down the rugged channel of the centuries, --- encouraging, refreshing, and stimulating God's people all the way. R. 2988

An affecting scene was before Peter as he entered the death-chamber. Poor widows and others were lamenting the loss of their friend, and showing the garments which she had made for them. That surely was a noble tribute to the usefulness of her life. No millionaire has ever left monuments which will endure so long, or which will reflect so much glory upon his character, as were left by this humble woman. And even the humblest and poorest of us may to some extent emulate this example and leave some such monuments of love and testimonies of appreciation behind us when we die. It is a sad end when any, especially of those who have named the name of Christ, die and leave none who sincerely, truly, mourn for them and miss them. It testifies to a life that was either selfish or misunderstood.



Peter Sees Dorcas and the Widows Weeping Over Her

Peter's most notable miracle was the bringing of Dorcas back from the portals of death. Like the raising of Aeneas, it was peculiar to that time, and for the special purpose of the establishment of the Church. R. 2987

Herod Arrests Peter

Acts 12:1-4

Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread. So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.

Herod was a family name. There were several kings over Israel by this name:

1. **Herod the Great**, who flourished about the time of our Lord's birth, and who murdered the babes of Bethlehem.

2. **Herod Archelaus**, son and successor to Herod the Great—deposed A.D. 6.

3. **Herod Antipas**, another son of Herod the Great, the murderer of John the Baptist, who subsequently, with his men of war, set at naught and mocked Jesus, just prior to his crucifixion – deposed A.D. 40.

4. **Herod Agrippa I.**, grandson of Herod the Great, mentioned in the present lesson as the murderer of the Apostle James.

5. **Herod Agrippa II.**, the last of the Herods, before whom the Apostle Paul defended himself. —Acts 26:28.

The Herod of our lesson (Agrippa I) was given his kingdom by Claudius Caesar, Emperor of Rome, whom he saved from a violent death. History says of him, "He curried favor with the Jews in every way: he hung in the Temple, as a votive offering, the gold chain which the Emperor Caligula had given him; he lived in Jerusalem, and punctiliously observed the traditions of the fathers, and secured the fervent loyalty of the Pharisees. At the Feast of Tabernacles, A.D. 41, he took the reader's stand, and read the whole Book of Deuteronomy aloud, bursting into tears, as if quite overcome, when he reached the words, 'Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, who is not thy brother.' He feared that because he had Edomite blood in his veins he might incur the hatred his grandfather, Herod the Great, had borne, and took this way to gain the political favor of the Jews, who cried out, 'Do not weep, Agrippa; thou art our brother.'"

Knowing thus much about the man, Herod, enables us to understand why he made his attack upon the Church. Although not a descendant of Jacob, but of Esau, he had espoused the religion prevalent in his kingdom, and was seeking favor with the Jews by his zeal for Judaism, —which meant, of course, his zeal and energy correspondingly against Christianity. As we have already seen, the Jews had begun

a work of persecution against the Church, but were hindered by their own troubles with Caligula Caesar; but the latter was now dead, and the persecuting tendencies of misdirected fervor could again be exercised.

The Apostle James, whose death is here recorded, in few words, was a matter of fact one of the most noble and notable of the apostles. He was one of the three who usually accompanied our Lord in the most confidential capacity; —with his brother John, and Peter, he was with the Lord in the Mount of Transfiguration. In the same company he was present at the awakening of Jairus' daughter. In the same company he was one of the inner circle of the Lord's friends in the trying hour in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was he and his brother whom our Lord surnamed Boanerges— "sons of thunder" —probably because of their eloquence and forcefulness of speech. It was he and his brother whose mother entreated the Lord that they might sit "the one on his right hand and the other on his left, in the Kingdom," and who, when questioned by our Lord, declared their willingness to share in his work and suffering, even unto death. They were both faithful, James being amongst the earliest of the martyrs for the cause, and John living to a life of old age, —being probably the last survivor of the apostles.

This James, who died early in the Christian era, should not be confounded with the other James, the author of the Epistle of James—known as "James the Less," the son of Alpheus (Cleopas—Mark 3:18) —husband of Mary, supposed to have been second cousin to our Lord, and for this reason, according to Jewish custom, styled "the Lord's brother." —Gal. 1:19.

When Herod saw what satisfaction it gave his subjects, and especially their leaders, the Pharisees, that he should thus persecute the Christians, he proceeded to take Peter also. The implication is that James and Peter were two of the foremost amongst the apostles in the Church at this time. The expression, "When he had apprehended him," implies that some delay occurred between the order for his arrest and the time of his imprisonment. He was delivered to four quaternions of soldiers. A quaternion consisted of four soldiers to guard a prisoner, two of them being chained to him, one on each side, by the wrists; the other two doing sentinel duty, one at the door of the cell and the other in an outer court. The four quaternions were in the nature of relief guards, so that each quaternion would have charge of the Apostle for six hours of the twenty-four. Thus, seemingly, every precaution had been taken against his escape. He had been delivered once before from the prison into which he had been thrust by the Sanhedrin, but now he was under military guard, probably in the Tower of Antonio, and chained to soldiers who knew that under Roman usage his escape would mean their death.

Probably all of the apostles were more or less secreted about that time, but, trusting to the sacredness of the Passover season, St. Peter ventured forth and was arrested and imprisoned, Agrippa intending his death directly at the close of the Passover week. R. 3003, R. 2140, R. 4346

Peter Slept

Acts 12:5-6

Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers, and the guards before the door were keeping the prison.

By this time the number of Christians in Jerusalem was evidently considerable, notwithstanding the number that had emigrated on account of persecution; and it does not at all surprise us that we are informed that these everywhere were praying to God on Peter's behalf. There were evidently no church buildings in use by the Christians up to this time: they gathered in convenient places, and quite probably there were several of these in Jerusalem. The earnestness of these prayers is evidenced by the fact that they were kept up all night, and evidently for the entire week of Peter's imprisonment.

The entire week had been spent in prayer on his behalf, yet the Lord had not delivered him, and each day seemed to add to the earnestness of the prayers, and to the necessity for the deliverance; yet knowing the circumstance it was difficult to judge in which way the Lord's providence would be interposed on Peter's behalf, if at all. Since the Lord had seen best to permit the death of James, they must have reasoned that they could not be at all certain that Peter would be delivered from death. How great and how far-reaching were the blessings of that week of trial and of prayer, of drawing near to the Lord and of realization of complete dependence upon him, we may surmise.

Even on the last night of his imprisonment, though he expected that the next morning Herod would call for him to deliver him up to death, notwithstanding all this, "Peter slept." His noble, courageous heart was fixed upon the Lord, he trusted in divine wisdom and divine power and divine love, and was assured that nothing would be permitted to happen that would not be in some manner overruled for good. Hence, committing his all to the Lord, he was able to rest sweetly in sleep. Here was the appropriate order of things: the one directly involved so sweetly resting in the Lord's grace and love that he was free from trouble and fear, while the Church in general, though not so directly and personally concerned, were so full of loving interest on behalf of a brother that they prayed without ceasing day and night on his behalf. R. 2140

Peter, his heart filled with the peace of God which passeth all understanding, was enabled to sleep peacefully in the prison, notwithstanding the unfavorable conditions in which he was placed, and his expectancy that on the morrow he would be called before the king and publicly executed. What a blessing is this rest of heart, this ability to entrust to the Lord all of life's affairs! R. 3003

He gives His beloved sleep.
Psalm 127:2

Constant Prayer Was Offered

It may be asked, Would it not have been appropriate for the Church to have offered prayer and then to have retired as usual, leaving the results entirely with the Lord? We reply that the examples given us in the Scriptures fully warranted the all-night prayer-meeting and even its continuance for several days. Do we not know of our Lord's remaining all night in the mountain at prayer? Do we not remember his long and repeated prayers in Gethsemane? Do we not remember the Apostle's exhortation to the Church, "Praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks"? Giving this a liberal construction as signifying a prayerful attitude of mind and continued looking to the Lord for his grace and guidance, nevertheless our Lord's parable of the importunate widow and her repeated comings and her reward all teach the same lesson of importunity. Besides, our Lord thus applied the parable, saying, "Shall not God avenge his very elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." —Luke 18:7,8.

The Lord has evidently left certain of the filling in of our experiences subject to change or modification. These minor details he is ready to use for the blessing of his people, for the development of their faith. Thus in St. Peter's case the Lord was doubtless intending a deliverance in some manner, because he had a further work for him to do, but he allowed it to come about in such a manner as to indicate it as a reward of the faith of those who prayed for him. Otherwise the deliverance might have come sooner or later, and in response to faith or works along some other line.

The question materially and properly arises, Why was Herod permitted to kill the Apostle James and not permitted to kill the Apostle Peter? Let us suppose that the Lord preserved Peter because he had a special work for him to do, and that he allowed the beheading of St. James, not because there was nothing more that he could do, but because by such a death as he experienced and at such a time he could accomplish the most that was possible—a work which could not have been so well done at another time, nor by the death of another person. St. James, apparently, was the leader amongst the apostles and his execution would be a great shock to the cause, awakening the followers of our Lord to renewed zeal and energy in the proclamation of the Truth. It doubtless served to increase the appreciation of the people for the apostles, causing them to give still more earnest heed to their teachings and to realize how greatly the cause of the Lord had been made dependent upon them, the "twelve apostles" of the Church. —Rev. 21:14.

This, then, would help to explain why the Church prayed day and night for St. Peter. The loss of St. James made St. Peter and every other Apostle doubly precious in the estimation of the "household of faith." God intended that St. Peter should live to be an old man, for this was our Lord's prophecy respecting him. But the emergency proved a blessing to the Church, by way of stirring up their pure minds to an appreciation of the Lord's cause in general and for St. Peter in particular. A similar lesson may be drawn today. As we see some ripe grains taken and other ripe grains left, it may mean that the Lord can use the death of the one the better and the life of the other the better, in his dealings with the Church. R. 4347

Another Angel

Acts 12:7-11

Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison, and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!"



St. Peter Freed By An Angel by Guercino c. 1622

And his chains fell off his hands. Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals", and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me."

So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord, and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people."

St. Peter, sleeping peacefully, was awakened by the angel, whose features were radiant, because this was necessary in order that the Apostle might discern that his deliverer was a holy being. Peter was bidden to rise up. Quickly and simultaneously the chains which bound him to the soldier by either hand were loosed. He was instructed to put on his wooden shoes, or sandals, and to put on his outer garment, or cloak, and to follow his leader. We read that he followed, realizing the facts as those of a dream. Thus he was led past the first and second wards, or doors until they came to the great gate of the city, which opened of its own accord, and then the angel left him.

It is worthy of notice that the miracles performed here were only such as were beyond Peter's natural power. Whatever he could do he was required to do, namely, putting on of his sandals and his cloak, and following the angel. He could have been

transported. His own sandals or other sandals could have been fastened to his feet. A new coat might have been provided. But the lesson is a more profitable one as it was given. Similarly in the Lord's dealings with us today, we should remember that it is ours to do everything within our power, and the Lord's to overrule all things for our good, and to supply our deficiencies from his abundance. Thus still he gives us day by day our daily bread, in the rain and the sunshine and the seed; but he expects us to labor for it, to plow the ground, to sow the seed, to harrow it, to thrash it, grind it and bake it.

Peter, amazed and bewildered, could scarcely realize at first whether it was a reality or a vision; but as he got his senses collected he comprehended that God had wrought for him another wonderful deliverance from the hands of his enemies —-Herod and the Jews. But he neither went back to taunt the soldiers, nor was he filled with self-admiration and self-confidence, so as to shout his deliverance on the way; but considering the matter carefully he concluded that his proper course would be flight to some other city, as the Lord had directed, saying, "When they shall persecute you in one city flee to another." But as a true under-shepherd he had too deep an interest in the Lord's people who were so earnestly praying for him, to leave them without some explanation: so, going to the house of one of the friends of the cause, he communicated to them the fact of his release, sent word to the leaders of the cause in the city-— "James, and the brethren" —-and then fled to another place. This James was the brother of our Lord, while the James who had been killed was the Apostle, the brother of John. The fact that James and the prominent brethren were not at the house of Mary and her son John-Mark would seem to corroborate the thought that the meeting at the latter place was only one of many in Jerusalem.

There is a simplicity to this narrative which, even on the surface, commends it as truthful. Were it a fiction doubtless the author would have stated matters altogether differently. He would have represented the angel as doing homage to the apostle, or delivering to him some complimentary message from the Lord, or lifting him up or putting on his sandals and fastening them for him, or assisting in girding him or putting on his mantle. He would have had him give Peter certain directions at the time of leaving, etc. But this simple account merely represents the angel as doing for Peter what he could not do for himself, and no more, and leaving him without a word as soon as he had brought him properly into the city.

The record shows that Peter was so surprised with what had transpired that he for a time fancied himself in a dream, in a trance, —-expecting that he would awaken shortly to realize himself still bound; but the cool morning air, between three and six o'clock, and being left alone, brought him to his senses and convinced him that he was actually at liberty. He knew well the usual meeting place, and thither he bent his steps. It was the home of Mary, mother of John Mark—-cousin of Barnabas, (so "sister's son" should read in Col. 4:10.) John was his Hebrew name and Marcus his Latin name. It was this Mark who was the Evangelist, the author of the Book of Mark, —-the same who accompanied Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey. R. 4347, R. 2140, R. 3003

Angels As Ministering Spirits

The Scriptures give us clearly to understand that the angels of God are

. . . all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation.
Hebrews 1:14

Very seldom have they been manifested to any as in this recorded instance; yet they are present as the representatives of the Lord to do any needed work for us according to his will. But we are to understand that the angel of the Lord was with James who was killed, as truly as with Peter who was delivered; and that the deliverance of God's people is not always such as can be appreciated by the natural senses. Sometimes the angel of the Lord is present with us and grants sustaining strength to endure a trial from which we are not delivered. Such was our Lord's case: we read that an angel appeared unto him and strengthened him. Such was probably the ministration of angels to James in his time of sore distress, when his life was yielded up to a murderer. Such also have been the experiences of many: the angel of the Lord has stood with them and has strengthened where he was not authorized to deliver. It is recorded that many Christian martyrs were so upheld and blessed, that even in the midst of persecution, torture and flames, they were able to sing praises to the Lord. It is related of Bishop Latimer that when bound to the stake he said to Bishop Ridley, speaking with great equanimity respecting his own suffering, "We shall light such a candle, by God's grace, in England this day, as I trust shall never be put out again."

In some of life's events we can see the Lord's protecting and guiding care most markedly, while in others it would seem absolutely lacking. The lesson it should bring to us is one of full faith in the Lord, and of full submission to all his providences. Indeed, we are to note that in the majority of cases our experiences are far more like that of James than like this experience of Peter's. The miracles which we can trace in our own experience are certainly few and far between. Whatever we have had, or whatever the apostles or others have had in this direction, which serves to demonstrate to us God's supervision of his own affairs, is evidently intended to give us strength and courage, whereby we can walk fearlessly and courageously in the dark, for, as the Apostle says, under divine providence we generally are called upon to "walk by faith, not by sight." —2 Cor. 5:7.

How it enlarges the confidence of a Christian to realize that whilst earthly powers may be in opposition, and whilst he may be really of himself powerless to resist adversaries, and whilst in addition to the flesh and blood adversaries he may realize that he battles also with spiritual wickedness in exalted places—against Satan and his minions of darkness—yet that, on the other hand, "greater is he that is on our part than all that be against us," and that all the heavenly hosts are subject to the divine will and may be employed for the advancement of the divine cause according to divine wisdom. R. 2140 and R. 3004

A Girl Named Rhoda

Acts 12:12-17

So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. But they said to her,
"You are beside yourself!"

Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said,
"It is his angel."

Now Peter continued knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said,
"Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren."

And he departed and went to another place.

The narrative of Peter's knocking at the door and the interruption of the prayer meeting, with the announcement of the answer of the prayers in a most remarkable manner, is all told with a beautiful simplicity, and indicates to us the loving spirit of fellowship and brotherhood which existed in the early Church.

The description of the house with an outer gate implies that it was one of the better class. Peter's knock was heard by little Rose, for such is the meaning of Rhoda. So overjoyed was she that, forgetful to let him in, she ran first to tell the praying household that Peter was at the gate. Expecting no deliverance at such an hour, some thought the maiden mistaken, and then insisted that it must be his angel—in harmony with the prevalent thought that an angel had supervision of each individual of God's people and that such might personate the one under his protection.

The brethren were surprised at the Lord's answer to their petitions, because it came so unexpectedly as respects time. There was an outburst of excitement and questions, which the Apostle was obliged to silence by the shaking of his hands. Then he narrated the wonderful story of his deliverance and bade them tell it to the other James, the brother (cousin) of Jesus, and the other disciples. Then Peter went his way, whether to another city or to another house, we do not know. In any event, he exercised wisdom in not needlessly provoking Herod. R. 2140 and R. 4347

Herod's Demise

Acts 12:18-23

Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed there.

Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king's personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's country. So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting,
"The voice of a god and not of a man!"

Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.

Here we learn of another visit of the angel of the Lord---this second time to smite Herod with disease (intestinal worms), from which he subsequently died. His tragic end at Caesarea, whither he had gone to a magnificent festival, in honor of Claudius Caesar, is thus summed up by Geike, from Josephus' account:

"A vast multitude assembled to see the festival and games, and before these the king, in all the pride of high state, appeared in robes inwrought with silver threads. The time chosen was daybreak, so that the kindling sun shining on his grand mantle lighted it into dazzling splendor. Presently some of his flatterers, always at hand beside a king, raised the cry, echoing a reminiscence of the days of Caligula, 'Deign to be gracious to us, thou divine one! Hitherto we have honored thee as a man; henceforth we own thee as more than mortal!' Instead of rebuking such lying servility he drank in this adulation with high pleasure. Next moment a great pain racked his bowels. Conscience-stricken at this blasphemous folly, the poor wretch felt that the wrath of God had struck him down, and the cry arose from him in his agony, 'See, your god must now give up life, and hasten into the arms of corruption!' In the Acts (12:23) we are told that he 'was eaten of worms.'"

This chapter then---Acts 12---shows us the power of Satan, the power of God, and the power of prayer. R. 4348 and R. 3002

But the word of God grew and multiplied.
Acts 12:24

The Jerusalem Council

Acts 15:5-11

Some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."

Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

It was nearly twenty years after the day of Pentecost that the conference noted in our lesson took place in Jerusalem. It was held for the purpose of reaching a decision respecting this very subject—the Law of Christ, its bearing upon Gentile converts, and upon Jewish converts—to what extent the Mosaic requirements were abolished as regarded the Jews, and to what extent the Law of Christ put restraints upon the converts from amongst the Gentiles, and to what extent these two classes, previously separated socially and religiously, by the requirements of the Mosaic Law, might now come together with full brotherly fellowship and affinity, without the violation of the consciences of any, and without unnecessary restraint of the liberties of any.

The Church at Antioch had become the center of Christianity amongst the Gentiles, and Jews born in Gentile lands. Its Gentile surroundings, no less than its membership, tended to cultivate in it a broad spirit of Christian liberty; —some of its membership, under the influence of brethren who had come from Jerusalem, feared that it had gone too far in the matter of Christian liberty, and held that Gentiles, upon accepting Christ through faith, should likewise accept Judaism and the Mosaic Law, and come as fully under the conditions of these, including circumcision, as tho they had been born Jews. Certain brethren who had recently arrived from Jerusalem accentuated these fears, and as a result there was quite a dissension in the Antioch Church, amounting, as the Greek word shows, almost to a schism, a split. But the right spirit evidently prevailed; because, instead of splitting over a vexed question, each party respected the conscientious convictions of the other, and it was wisely determined to appeal the matter to the Church at Jerusalem for such words of counsel and advice as its leaders, the apostles and elders, should see fit to give.

The Antioch brethren evidently had full confidence that God had appointed the apostles, and that their conclusion on the matter would ultimately be the correct one. At the same time, knowing that the brethren at Jerusalem were surrounded by the Judaizing influence, tending rather to narrowness of view as respected the Mosaic customs, they sent their two leading representatives, Paul and Barnabas, to present before the Jerusalem Council the views which seemed to the majority of the Church to be the correct ones, —that thus the entire subject might be fully, fairly, thoroughly investigated, and the mind of the Lord determined as accurately as possible. This was a beautiful spirit—the right spirit; far more commendable in God's sight and in the judgment of sound-minded men than any immoderate course they could have taken.

Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all things that God had done with them.
Acts 15:2,4

The truth has nothing to lose by fairness, openness, and a reasonable moderation and the turning on of all light obtainable. And while the Church at Antioch evidently had great confidence in Paul and Barnabas, they properly also had great confidence and respect for the apostles at Jerusalem, and reasoned that since these men all gave evidence that they were truly the Lord's special servants and mouthpieces, it would be strange indeed if meeting together and hearing all that could be said on both sides of the question, they could not arrive at a unanimous decision respecting the Lord's will, that would assure the Church in general. We commend this noble principle which is as applicable now as it was then. Today, however, as we cannot refer questions to the living Apostles, we must refer them to the recorded teaching of our Lord and the apostles, —seeking assistance in this amongst the brethren who appear to have the best knowledge of God's Word and the greatest insight into the divine plan.

Thus the question was brought forward, and a special meeting was appointed, at which the apostles and elders heard all that was to be said on the subject, —and we read that there was "much dispute." We rejoice that there was such a spirit of broadmindedness in the early Church as is represented by this statement— we rejoice that when an important subject was to be considered, with a view to knowing the mind of the Lord, that there was fullest liberty granted for as much dispute or debate, in a proper manner, as was necessary to bring the whole subject before those who had it under consideration. There is a difference, however, between disputes and discussions inside the pale of faith and disputes outside that boundary. As the Apostle says, "He that is weak in the faith receive ye [do not reject him because he has not such full, strong, vigorous faith as we should like to see], but not to doubtful disputations" —do not receive him to dispute his doubts, —what he does not believe. Let him have a full opportunity for hearing the faith discussed; if

his doubts do not then disappear probably he himself will disappear, —-drop out of the assembly. In harmony with this we are not to recognize disputes respecting the foundation principles of the gospel of Christ. The Church is composed only of those who recognize the foundation—-that Christ died for our sins, for our redemption from sin and from its penalty; and that all who would share his blessing must accept these simple facts of his death for us and his resurrection by the power of God for our ultimate deliverance; —-and then in harmony with their desire to be his disciples they must make a consecration of themselves to him, to do his will and to serve his cause. These foundation principles of the Church of Christ are not subject to dispute. Those who reject these are not of the Church and should not be heard in the Church.

When a fair hearing had been granted to both sides of the question, Peter, one of the leading apostles, and doubtless the eldest, rehearsed his experiences with Cornelius; then Paul and Barnabas were heard, and James closed the discussion.

**And after they had become silent,
James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me:
Simon has declared how God at the first visited the
Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name."
Acts 15:13-14**

When these brethren had related their experiences among the Gentiles, and after Peter had called attention to his vision and his subsequent experiences, all of which is only briefly stated here, then James, who seems to have been the moderator of the meeting, gave the decision which had been forming in his mind and the Scriptural reasons upon which he based it. He said, "Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simon [Simon Peter—-verse 7] has declared how God at first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name." Then he shows how this blessing of the Gentiles agrees with the teaching of the prophets, to the effect that the blessing of Israel first is only that through them as a channel it may flow to the Gentiles also. And so they as Jewish converts to Christ were merely the channels through whom God would send his blessed gospel to the Gentiles also. Yes, he said, this was evidently God's plan from the beginning.

All upheld the teachings and practices of Paul and Barnabas, and cited the leadings of the Lord's spirit, as well as the prophecies of the Old Testament in corroboration of this position which, doubtless, as above suggested, they had held tentatively for some time, though they only now thought it necessary to make a public statement regarding it. The conclusion was satisfactory to the apostles and elders and the whole Church; and an answer in harmony with this was sent to the friends at Antioch, Syria, and throughout Silicia—-the regions which had been affected by the Judaizing teachers.

We have in Verses 22-29 the decision of the Apostles on the question. They not only wrote it out, but sent it at the hand of two of their trusted brethren, Judas-Barnabas and Silas, with Paul and Barnabas, that they might have the matter in written and

in oral testimony. The declaration was that the disquieting teachings had not been authorized by the Apostles at Jerusalem. Then they briefly summed up [the recommendations], not as Law, but as "necessary things." The things here recommended were necessary to a preservation of the fellowship of the "Body" composed of Jews and Gentiles of their different education and sentiments.
R. 3018, R. 1472, R. 4374

The apostles, the elders, and the brethren,
To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in
Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:
Greetings.
Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law"--to whom we gave no such commandment--it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things that you abstain:

- from things offered to idols,
- from blood,
- from things strangled, and
- from sexual immorality.

If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.
Farewell.

Acts 15:23-29

Peter Confronted by Paul

Galatians 2:11-14

Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed, for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles, but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel,
I said to Peter before them all,
"If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

The fact that Peter "dissembled" or acted in a two-faced manner on one occasion, in dealing with Jews and Gentiles, is pointed to as proof that the apostles were "men of like passions" as others, and were not infallible in conduct. Again we concede the charge, and find that the apostles conceded this (Acts 14:15); but we repeat that these human weaknesses were not permitted to mar their work and usefulness as apostles—as those who preached the gospel with the holy spirit sent down from heaven (1 Pet. 1:12; Gal. 1:11,12) —not with man's wisdom but with the wisdom from above. (1 Cor. 2:5-16.) And this error of Peter God at once corrected, through the Apostle Paul, who kindly but firmly "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." (Gal. 2:11.) And it is quite noticeable that Peter's two epistles show no trace of wavering on the subject of the equality of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, nor any fearfulness in acknowledging the Lord.

Rightly exercised by reproof and discipline, and endeavoring to rule himself, Peter's Christian character ripened and beautified from year to year as evidenced by his grand and noble epistles to the church, written by inspiration and handed down from generation to generation for nineteen centuries; and he had many evident marks of the Lord's loving approval. Before he had time to express in words his regret of his denial of the Lord, he was assured of his acceptance with him and of the continued favor of feeding his sheep; for the Lord knew the sincerity of his love and that through weakness and fear he had sinned. Mark too, Peter's affection for his "beloved brother Paul" (2 Pet. 3:15,16) who had so plainly reproved and rebuked him:

Consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation---
as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom
given to him, has written to you.
2 Peter 3:15

Did Peter finally overcome? and was he accepted as one of that glorious company which shall constitute the Bride of Christ? Yes truly; for the risen Lord himself declared that his name is written with the others of the twelve apostles in the very foundations of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God. (Rev. 21:14.) R. 1526 and R. 1041

First Epistle of St. Peter



6

Out of a heart

inspired with the glorious hope set before the consecrated saints of the Gospel dispensation flows the impassioned and eloquent greeting of the Apostle Peter to others of like precious faith. To

the elect according to the foreknowledge of God,

and every line of his epistle, even the words of greeting, are full of instruction.

To appreciate the exhortations of the apostles, we need to become acquainted with their several characters; to note their circumstances; to mark their zeal and faithfulness; and to remember that every word of exhortation addressed to the Church has the substantial backing of their worthy examples. They endured hardness as good soldiers, and suffered much for the privilege of declaring the truth. In their writings are blended a high degree of the power of logic, eloquence and pathos, combined with an inspiring enthusiasm which must awaken in every student of their teachings a measure, at least, of the same sacred flame.

Peter was the Apostle to the circumcision, Paul to the uncircumcision. (Gal. 2:7,8.) In 1 Peter 1:1, Peter accordingly addresses those who had been Jews, Israelites, non-residents of Palestine. But please note carefully that he is not addressing "lost" Israelites; but the large class of Israelites of all tribes, who after the Babylonian captivity made their homes amongst the Gentiles. Peter knew and tells where they resided.

The Apostle Peter declares the Church to be "elect [chosen] through sanctification [setting apart] of the Spirit unto obedience." (1 Pet. 1:2) The thought here is that those whom God now recognizes as his chosen ones, and who are exhorted to make their calling and election sure, are chosen, not arbitrarily, but according to fixed principles, viz., that if the holy Spirit of God (influence of the Truth) operating upon them shall bring them to the condition of full obedience (sanctification) to the Father's will and plan and providence, then they shall constitute the elect.

The Apostle marks out the terms of our election; none can remain in this elect company, nor make his calling and election sure, without being under the sprinkling of the blood—justification through faith in the great sacrifice; nor can any attain it without sanctification, a setting apart to God; and such a sanctification as will lead to obedience to God—to the full submission of his will to the will of the Father in heaven.

Such must be the character of those who will be of the elect, and this class of which we are seeking to become members was predetermined, foreordained by God; it was not a new thing, but the carrying out of the original divine purpose, in which also our Lord Jesus shared. This the same Apostle shows (1 Pet. 2:4-6), declaring that our Lord Jesus himself was the elect of God, and that we who are now being chosen from amongst men to be "members of the body of Christ," members of the elect class, are chosen in him, chosen as members of his body, and as such must be conformed to the likeness of his character. He says: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but **chosen [elect]** of God and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up, a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices* acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

"Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, **elect**, precious, and he that believeth in him shall not be confounded." (1 Pet. 2:6.) Thus the Church of Christ, the elect little flock, are now being shaped, fitted and prepared for positions in the Temple of God, of which the dear Redeemer himself is the chief cornerstone, the foundation.

"They that are with him are called and **chosen [elect**—the same word in the Greek] and faithful." (Rev. 17:14.) Here in symbol our Lord Jesus tells John, and us through him, of the glorious exaltation of the elect in the Kingdom, when they shall be with him and share his glory as the Apostle declares, and with him judge the world; —granting trial, with gracious opportunities to every member of Adam's race to return to full harmony with God through the merit and by the assistance of him who redeemed the race. R. 1598, R. 3149, R. 2126, E243, R. 3587

1 Peter Chapter 1

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

2 elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

9 receiving the end of your faith---the salvation of your souls.

10 Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you,

11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven---things which angels desire to look into.

13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance,

15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

16 because it is written, "BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

17 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear,

18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,

19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you

21 who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,

23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,

24 because "ALL FLESH IS AS GRASS, AND ALL THE GLORY OF MAN AS THE FLOWER OF THE GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND ITS FLOWER FALLS AWAY,

25 BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

1:1-2 See the introduction to this chapter.

1:3-4 The **death** of Christ was not all that was necessary. "He **rose** again for our justification." His death was for the cancelation of our sins; but it could not effect our justification while He was still in the bonds of death—not until He had risen—and more, not until He had ascended up on High—and more, not until He had presented His merit on our behalf—on behalf of the Church. Still more than this, our justification is not accomplished until, in each individual case, the necessary steps of faith and full consecration have been taken, as a result of which the merit of our Redeemer is imputed.

This merit of Christ has not as yet been presented for the world, because their time has not yet come. Thus far it has been presented only for the Church—those who are called to be joint-heirs with Christ, and who accept the Call. When Jesus appeared in the presence of God for us, there was an arrangement then effected by which we might become justified. There are certain inflexible conditions upon which God is willing to impute this merit of Christ's death. It is those only who wish to turn away from sin, to be justified from sin, and to serve God, to whom this favor is offered. Only these can now become sons of God.

Whether these steps take years or days or a few minutes, all these steps must be taken before we are in the place where we can be accepted of Christ and presented by Him to the Father. When our Redeemer imputes to us His merit, covering our blemishes, this brings us to the place of vital justification. We have done nothing to accomplish this justification. We have merely presented ourselves that we might become servants of righteousness. We have merely placed ourselves in the position of readiness to receive the blessing. When our Savior's merit was thus imputed, all our past was forgiven, our blemishes covered, the Father accepted the offering, and our High Priest sacrificed us as justified human beings. At that moment we were begotten of the Father by His Holy Spirit, "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us." (1 Peter 1:4.) We became embryo New Creatures, who were then to grow and develop day by day until, in due time, we would be born as spirit beings on the Divine plane, if faithful unto death. R. 5854

1:5 The Greek words **apokalupsis** and **apokalupto** signify **revealment, uncovering, unveiling** (as of a thing previously present but hidden). The name of the last book of the Bible is from the same root—Apocalypse or Revelation. **Apokalupsis** is rendered **revealed, revelation, appearing, coming** and **manifestation**, in this text which relates to the Lord's second **presence** and power and glory, as these shall be made known, —uncovered or revealed to the world.

The glorious inheritance of the saints was not for immediate possession at the instant of death, but it was **reserved**, and that it would be revealed in the **last time**—at the second advent of the Lord. So the Apostle Paul also taught, saying, when he was about to die, "**Henceforth**, there is **laid up** for me a crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me **at that day**; and not to me only, but to all them also **that love his appearing**." —2 Tim. 4:7,8. R. 2979, R. 1598

1:6-9 These verses are precious reminders of the joys of faith, to attain the full fruition of which, the endurance of present afflictions are causes for thanksgiving, because their discipline is necessary to prepare us for the glorious inheritance of the saints in light.

If we could but keep in memory the fact that every trial, every persecution, every difficulty of life, permitted to come upon those who have made the covenant of sacrifice with the Lord, is intended to **prove them**, to test their love, to see whether or not their characters are fixed, rooted and grounded in righteousness and being built up in love, it would put all these trials, difficulties and temptations in a new light before us, and greatly assist us in fighting a good fight and overcoming. We would say, If by these little trials the Lord is proving my love and devotion to him, then, however trifling they may be or however important, I will diligently use them as favorable opportunities to demonstrate to my Lord the fullness of my love and devotion to him and his cause. Thus viewed and thus met, every trial and every difficulty would prove to be a blessing:

And if only those who have faith have been called throughout this Gospel age, what shall we say of the testings of faith for these? The Apostle's intimation is that their faith will need a great testing. Gold has a special value at the present time by reason of its scarcity—a value that will perish when with the new order of things it will be as easy to have gold as to have clay or iron; but the "little flock," which the Lord is selecting during this Gospel age, is always to be specially precious in that to this class alone of humanity, so far as the divine revelation shows, will be granted the divine nature, with its glory, honor and immortality. Hence the trial of the faith of this class is very precious, a very important matter.

What then is God seeking in us? The development and perfection of faith! This is the faith through which will be reckoned to us the merit of Christ's atonement, and through which we will have reconciliation. This is the faith that must be proven to have such tenacity and strength that it will trust the Lord even where it cannot trace him, as did Abraham when he believed that God was able and willing to fulfill his promise, even though it should imply the resurrection of Isaac from the dead. We must learn, we must develop, at least that much faith also, so that we will believe in God and the fulfillment of his promises even though the fulfillment of them signifies not only our own resurrection from the dead to glory, honor and immortality, but signifies also an awakening of all the families of the earth from the prison-house of the tomb. R. 1598, R. 2258, R. 4004

1:10-12 So far from the utterances [of the prophets] being their own ideas of what would come to pass, the Lord sends us word, through the Apostle Peter (1 Pet. 1:10,11), that the prophets did not know, but searched diligently to know what and what manner of time (whether literal or symbolic) the spirit which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand concerning the sufferings of Christ and concerning the glory and restitution of all things (Acts 3:21) that would follow as a result of his suffering—the just for the unjust. And not only does the Apostle tell us of this, but the prophets themselves acknowledge their own ignorance (Dan. 8:26,27; 12:4,8,9; Ezek. 20:49); and the Apostle exclaims that they spoke and wrote not for themselves and the people then living, but for the instruction of the Gospel Church, and especially for the two ends, the opening and the closing of the Gospel age. —1 Pet. 1:12; 1 Cor. 10:11.

These verses declare that the revelations of divine truth concerning the glorious inheritance of the saints of the Gospel age were never made known in former ages, even to the faithful prophets, nor to the angels who earnestly desired to know, and who diligently searched and sought to discover the deep significance of the prophecies of these things, which are now made known to us by the holy Spirit which inspired the apostles and through them instructs the Church. R. 1418, R. 1528

1:13 Though written so long ago, these words of exhortation lose none of their force to us. They were penned for the instruction of the whole Church, down to the end of the age. The introductory, "**Wherefore**," refers us to the glorious hope of our high calling, and of the necessarily severe measures required to fit us for our exalted inheritance, as mentioned in the preceding verses. Peter would have us appreciate what it is to be called with such a high calling—to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith. (Verse 4.)

"**Wherefore**," then, you that discern the prize of your high calling, and who are endeavoring to press along the line toward the mark, "gird up the loins of your mind" —as in the illustration; strengthen and fortify your purposes and efforts; renew your determination; redouble your diligence; cast aside the weights of unnecessary worldly cares; increase your zeal; and, as the Apostle Paul also urges, run with patience the race set before you. Run, not like one who is merely beating the air, but like one who has a purpose in view, and who, in desperate earnest, is **determined** to make his calling and election sure. —Heb. 12:1; 1 Cor. 9:26.

Having thus "girded up the loins of your mind" for a long, steady and determined effort, he further counsels, — "Be sober:" do not allow yourself to become excited and, under the spur of excitement, to exhaust all your spiritual vitality in a very short time, and then to suffer a relapse into coldness or discouragement; but thoughtfully to consider and prepare for a long and patient endurance of all the discipline and trial of faith and patience necessary to prove an overcomer and worthy of the blessed reward promised "to him that overcometh." The race before us is not one to be run by fits and starts, but by "**patient continuance** in well doing." Soberly, thoughtfully, we are to weigh and endeavor to realize the import of the exceeding great and precious promises and to gather from them their invigorating inspiration; earnestly we must apply our minds and hearts to the instruction of the inspired Word of God, availing ourselves also of such helps—of "pastors and teachers" and their literary productions—which prove harmonious with, and helpful to, the study of the Scriptures; diligently and patiently we must submit ourselves to all the transforming influences of divine grace and truth; and then, loyally and faithfully, we must devote our consecrated talents, however few or many, to the great work of preaching this gospel of the Kingdom to all who will hear.

Such a sober view of the situation fortifies the mind against discouragement, and enables us, as the Apostle suggests, to "hope to the end for the grace to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ." In this sober view of our high calling and its privileges, and the abundant resources of divine grace, let us not be discouraged or overcome in any way, but let us hope to the end for the grace (favor) that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ—at his second advent. The Church has enjoyed much of the

divine favor all through the age of her probation and trial; but the grace to be revealed at the revelation of Jesus Christ---when he comes to reign in power and great glory---is her exaltation with him to sit with him in his throne. This glorious consummation, the Church all through the age must steadily keep in view: but how glorious is the privilege of those of its members living in this end of the age, when already, even before our change into his glorious likeness---in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye---we begin to enter the joys of our Lord. R. 3149

1:14-16 In line with this thought, the Apostle says, "Be ye **transformed, by** the renewing of your **minds**" ---not by the renewing of the new **will**. We already **possess** the new **will**. But we see that the **body** is regulated by the **mind**. Therefore the new will says, I must begin with the **mind** I must get my mind to **see** things correctly, according to God's will.

The new **will** is, in substance, a will to be like our Father in Heaven. The Apostle Peter exhorts, "As He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy." Holiness is the standard of perfection. Our **will** must be holy when we first make our Covenant with God. Nothing less than a holy will is acceptable to Him. If we had had an unholy will, a will not submissive to God, we would not have been accepted. So if our **will** be holy, we shall, as far as we are able, **do** His will. As He who has called us is holy, so we, as far as our will is concerned, will be holy. And we will so direct our mind, as to be holy in life so far as is possible.

Key References: ***For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy, for I am holy. Lev. 11:44***

Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. Lev. 19:2

The Apostle enjoins upon us that we shall be "holy in all manner of conversation." (1 Pet. 1:15.) The word **conversation** here has its broad meaning. It relates to all of our conduct with respect to others---our manner of life. We are to be holy in **everything** that pertains to our lives---in our thoughts, words and deeds. This is a very high standard; and no wonder that the Lord has set a high standard! It is for us to learn what this standard is, and to help others to know what it is. R. 5482

1:17 The fear which we are to lose entirely is "the fear of man which bringeth a snare." He who loses the fear of God, and the fear of losing the great prize which God has held out before us, is in a very dangerous position.

The Apostle says to the pilgrims who seek the heavenly country, --- "If ye call on him as Father,... pass the time of your sojourning here in **fear**" (1 Pet. 1:17); not in levity, nor in worldly frivolities, nor in sensualities, nor in land and money grabbing, nor even carelessly and slothfully, but in earnest watchfulness of every word and act, to please the Lord and to copy his character and thus to make your calling and election sure to a place in his Kingdom, when it shall be established in power and great glory. R. 2289

Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.
– 1 Peter 1:18-19 –

The Scriptures assure us that God authorized Christ and all his followers to be his ambassadors and ministers, to make known the good tidings of reconciliation accomplished "by the death of his Son, whom he set forth to be a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (Rom. 3:25, and 1 John 2:2.) They assure us also that Jehovah's love and wisdom planned the redemption, and that, in raising Christ from the dead, he gave proof of the acceptableness of the sacrifice, and of the certainty of the resultant blessing. It is not only true that in due time God sent his only begotten Son for our redemption (Rom. 5:6), and that God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8), but it is true also that this was Jehovah's original plan, and that before sin entered, even before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:18-20; Rev. 13:8), his wisdom and love provided, and beheld in the distance,

the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

The *only way*, by which any and all of the condemned race may come to God, is not by meritorious works, neither by ignorance, but by faith in the precious blood of Christ, which taketh away the sin of the world. (1 Peter 1:19; John 1:29) This is the Gospel, the good tidings of great joy,

"which *shall be* unto ALL PEOPLE." A103, R. 788

He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.
1 Peter 1:20

1:18-19 Whenever the shedding of the Blood is referred to, the giving up of life, the death, is the main thought—thus the passage, "We are not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ," signifies that we are redeemed with the incorruptible life of Christ—the life which was not under penalty, not forfeited, not condemned, but approved, and which was yielded up as a sacrifice, as a corresponding price, a ransom, for the forfeited life of Adam and his race.

Every sacrifice for the Lord's altar must be "without spot or blemish." Every member of our race was spotted and blemished by inherited sin and imperfection, and hence the necessity for the Divine provision of Justification by **faith**—not faith in Covenants, but faith in the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." This faith grasps the fact that while the sin of the world has not yet been taken away by the Lamb of God, and the world still lies under condemnation, nevertheless the merit of the blood has been applied on behalf of the "household" of faith—and in due time will be made efficacious, under the New Covenant, for the bringing of forgiveness to every creature, with the opportunity of eternal life. HG482, R. 4398

1:20 We should note God's purpose to select from mankind a "little flock" on whom to confer Kingdom power in due time, making them his representatives and agents in the work of blessing the world of mankind with all the favors secured by the ransom sacrifice. The Scriptures show us that this plan or purpose of God was foreknown, forearranged, by him before the foundation of the world. They show us also that in the divine purpose our Lord Jesus was the Head, the First, the principal One, the Lord of this little flock, and that God's dealings with him and the method by which he was prepared for his present high position were an illustration of the method by which his Church is to be prepared for joint-heirship with him in his Kingdom. —Eph. 1:3,4, 4:15; Col. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:20.

God intended to bless all the members of the human race, all nations and kindreds and tongues, and purposed that the blessing should come to them through the Seed of Abraham. this was God's Plan and purpose from **before the foundation of the world.** This is the Gospel, or good tidings, first declared to Abraham: "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." R. 2479, R. 5057

1:21 Those who claim that our Lord himself did not die, but that merely his flesh died, are totally unable to answer or harmonize the Scriptural declarations on this subject, which are most pointedly to the effect] that "he poured out his **soul** unto death;" "he made his **soul** an offering for sin." It was Adam's soul (being, existence) that came under the sentence of death through disobedience. It was not merely a sin of his body, but, as the Scriptures declare, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." It was Adam's soul that needed to be redeemed, and not merely his body, because if the soul were redeemed God could give it a new body as it pleased him. God's proposition is not to give back, atom for atom, the same bodies that moulder into dust. On the contrary, it matters little what becomes of these mortal bodies, for it was not these that were redeemed, nor these that are to be restored. It was the soul that needed redemption; it was the soul that was redeemed; it was the soul of our Lord Jesus that was given as a ransom price for the soul of Adam; and the result is that the souls of Adam and his posterity are all guaranteed a resurrection.

This central thought of the resurrection is wholly overlooked by Christian people in general, who leave the **soul** out of the question, —out of redemption and out of the resurrection, whereas it is the all-important. It is because the Apostle Paul recognized this matter so clearly that he stated himself so positively on this subject in his great chapter on the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15. He recognized that it was Christ's soul that died—that his very existence had ceased in death; that not merely his body, but himself, was absolutely dead three days, and this is our Lord's own statement, "I am he that liveth and was dead." He does not say, I am he who lived always and who never died, but whose body died for the brief space of a few hours.

The Scriptures nowhere intimate that our Lord Jesus did or could raise himself from the dead. If it were merely his body that had died, and if he were more alive than ever, of course he could just as easily quicken his own body that had died as he could quicken the body of Lazarus, and it be no more of a miracle, and no more of a proof. But if, as the Scriptures declare, it was his soul that died then he was wholly dead, and could have no power whatever to resuscitate himself. To this the Scriptures agree, declaring in so many words that "God the Father raised him from the dead." (Gal. 1:1.) Nor is this an exceptional statement of the matter. It is the united testimony of the Scriptures, in proof of which note the following: Acts 2:24,32; 3:15; 4:10; 10:40; 13:30,34; 17:31; Rom. 4:24; 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:15; 2 Cor. 4:14; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 1:21. R. 2794, R. 2795

1:22 The word "souls" in this text stands, as usual, for the being, and not merely for the physical being, which is included. The purifying, therefore, refers to a thorough cleansing of the heart (the mind, the will, the actuating intentions, or motives), as the effect of such purification will be manifest in the outward life and conduct. We purify our souls—that is, our souls are purified (have been purified if we are saints)—by obedience to the Truth through the spirit; that is to imply that it is necessary for us to know the Truth.

When we presented ourselves in spirit and in truth, through faith, our sins were forgiven; we were accepted as New Creatures in Christ; our souls were purified; we were started in a new career. The Apostle proceeds to say that, having had this glorious transformation of character, through the knowledge of and obedience to the spirit of the Truth, we have learned to love the brethren with an "unfeigned love," a love that is genuine, without pretence—not merely an outward profession, to have a smile upon the face or to give a cordial grasp of the hand, but that through this spirit we have recognized that all who trust in the precious blood and are consecrated to the dear Redeemer, and are seeking to follow his leadings, are "brethren." We have reached the point where our hearts are so full of the Spirit of the Master that we can truthfully say we love all the brethren with a love which is sincere and not at all feigned.

Now, having gotten along thus far in the good way, the Apostle shows us that there is yet an advance step of love, and states what next we must do in order to keep our hearts pure: "See that ye love one another with a pure heart **fervently**." We must not only regard them as brethren and give them "unfeigned love," but should recognize the principle underlying our relationship to the Lord and their relationship to the Lord; how they, like ourselves, are New Creatures in Christ; and this should give us great sympathy and a desire to do everything we can to encourage them, to help them. R. 4766

1:23-25 "**born again**"—In 1 Peter 1:3, **ana-gennao** is correctly rendered "begotten again," but here in verse 23 the same word is rendered incorrectly "born again." Please note these illustrations carefully.

The New Creature is begotten of incorruptible seed in the sense that this seed will not become unholy. It will not be corrupted. Therefore, the Apostle argues, if any of God's people, after receiving the holy Spirit, if they turn away from that holy Spirit, they are losing it entirely, that they are dying to it, that God's Spirit cannot be corrupted. You may give your will or consent to God's Spirit and then you may afterward take your will away from God's Spirit of begetting; but the Spirit of God always stays pure, holy, incorruptible, but that Spirit in you is the begettal or the energy of God working in you and to bring you to that incorruptible condition, if you allow that holy Spirit in you to do God's good pleasure, and then eventually, by the change of resurrection by God's favor you would be an incorruptible being beyond the veil. It is the holy Spirit that is incorruptible. It is the holy Spirit that cannot be perverted, and it will not stoop to corruption. As long, therefore, as we have this spirit energizing us and actuating us, we are incorruptible, but as soon as we renounce that, we do not change God's Spirit, but we become corrupted ourselves, and will die the second death, as St. Paul explains.

Key Reference: ***The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the LORD blows upon it. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever. Isa. 40:7-8***



Notice that PETER is the apostle whom God has chosen to speak most clearly concerning the inspiration and importance of the **written Word** (1 Pet. 1:10,11,23,25; 2:2; 2 Pet. 1:19-21) The Scriptures from first to last give us to understand that God's Word is to shine more and more brightly down to the very end of this Gospel Age. St. Peter declares it to be the "more sure Word of prophecy to which we do well that we take heed as to a light shining in a dark place until the day dawn." —2 Peter 1:19. The Word of God shall stand forever, and the spirit of the Truth shall make free indeed all the children of the Truth. R. 837, Q509, R. 2012, R. 4858

1 Peter Chapter 2

1 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,

2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,

3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,

5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual* sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHIEF CORNERSTONE, ELECT, PRECIOUS, AND HE WHO BELIEVES ON HIM WILL BY NO MEANS BE PUT TO SHAME."

7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious, but to those who are disobedient, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE,"

8 and "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light,

10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,

12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme,

14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.

15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men---

16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

17 Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.

19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.

20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

22 "WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH,"

23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously,

24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness---by whose stripes you were healed.

25 For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

*The word *spiritual* (v. 5) is omitted in this verse as spurious by old MSS. The flesh is sacrificed, not the new creature.

2:1 Beware of all thoughts, feelings and conditions of heart directly or remotely connected with malice, envy, hatred, strife. Give these no place in your heart even for a moment; for they will surely do you great injury, aside from leading to the injury of others. Keep your heart, your will, your intentions and desires full of love toward God and all his creatures —the most fervent toward God, and proportionately toward all who have his spirit and walk in the way of his direction. Keep constantly before you the prayer, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer." —Psa. 19:14.

The Scriptures instruct us, "Let your conversation be such as becometh saints;" "Let your speech be with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man;" "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is **good**, to the use of **edifying**,—that it may minister grace unto the hearers." —Phil. 1:27; Col. 4:6; Eph. 4:29. R. 4803, R. 2443

2:2-3 "Desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby," and become strong. (1 Pet. 2:2.) This milk of the Word the Lord gives at first to his children, that the new nature may grow thereby and become able to digest stronger food and thus develop in character-likeness to our Lord. We find that repeatedly in the Scriptures the young Christian and the less developed are likened to babes, to children. Thus the Apostle Paul exhorts: "Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men." —1 Cor. 14:20; 1 Peter 2:2.

As we mature, "grow in grace," we will desire and seek and obtain, in addition to the milk of the Word, the "strong meat" which the Apostle declares is for those of fuller development. (1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:13,14) The development in the graces of the Spirit, faith, fortitude, knowledge, self-control, patience, piety, brotherly kindness, love, will bring us into closer fellowship with the Father and with the Lord Jesus, so that the Lord will be able and willing to communicate to us more and more clearly a knowledge of his gracious plans, as well as of his own gracious character. R. 4817, R. 2660, E238

2:4-6 The Apostle Peter declares that our Lord Jesus himself was the elect of God, and that we who are now being chosen from amongst men to be "members of the body of Christ," members of the elect class, are chosen in him, chosen as members of his body, and as such must be conformed to the likeness of his character. He says: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but **chosen [elect]** of God and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up, a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

"Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth in him shall not be confounded." (1 Pet. 2:6.) Thus the Church of Christ, the elect little flock, are now being shaped, fitted and prepared for positions in the Temple of God, of which the dear Redeemer himself is the chief cornerstone, the foundation.

According to the Greek, our Lord replied to [Peter's confession in Matthew 16:16], "Thou art a stone, and upon this rock will I build my Church." The rock upon which the Church

is built is this confession which St. Peter made. St. Peter himself was not the rock, but he was one of the living stones built by faith upon the rock of truth. It was this same Apostle who so beautifully explained the whole matter, assuring us that all consecrated believers are "living stones" in the temple of God, whose foundation and capstone is Christ, in whom we are builded together through the operation of the holy Spirit. —1 Pet. 2:4-7. R. 3587, R. 4645

Key Reference: ***Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. Whoever believes will not act hastily." Isa. 28:16***

2:7-8

Key References: ***The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. Psa. 118:22***

He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Isa. 8:14

The Apostle shows us that Christ Jesus himself is the great Corner-Stone of this house of sons, and that all of the faithful followers of Christ are being shaped, fitted, polished, prepared, as "living stones," for places in this antitypical Temple, whose builder and maker is God. —1 Pet. 2:7; Heb. 11:10.

It is only when we get a glimpse through the New Testament of the glory, honor and immortality which shall attach to the great spiritual Temple now under construction, and realize by faith the "glory that shall be revealed in us," in God's due time, that we can realize even slightly the significance of the words of the Prophet, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace." [Hag. 2:9]

Present conditions seem so contrary to all the grand restitution outcome that it cannot be fully believed and trusted by any except those who have learned to walk with the Lord, and in their weakness to lean upon his might, —to trust to his power to accomplish all the exceeding great and precious things which he has promised. To all others these things will appear untrue, and God will appear unfaithful, and the matters which we are here discussing will seem "idle tales," as fables and golden fancies: but to us who believe these promises are precious, and he from whom we receive them is precious, correspondingly as we know him and trust him.

Verse 8 calls to our remembrance that the Lord foretold this, saying, "He shall be...for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel." (Isa. 8:14.) This stone was stumbled over in the end of the Jewish Age. (1 Peter 2:8.) The Scriptures set forth that Jesus is the Way. The Lord is a Stumbling-Stone in the pathway of many. These passages do not refer to the world. It was not the Gentile nations that stumbled over Jesus at His First Advent, but it was some of the true Israelites who were there stumbled. And the text implies the stumbling of some true Spiritual Israelites because of the coming of the Lord in a way totally different from what they had imagined.
R. 2520, R. 2833, R. 5258

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.
– 1 Peter 2:9-10 –

In this text the Apostle Peter is pointing out the fact that the Church of Christ is separate and distinct from all other people. For many centuries before our Lord came, the Jews had understood that they were God's people. He had made a special Covenant with them through Moses, which constituted them His people. He had also made certain promises to them dependent on their keeping of the Law. Thus they were His chosen —heirs of certain special promises that were conditioned upon their obedience, and of certain other promises that were stated without specified conditions. God had also promised to make a New Covenant with them, to give them a new heart, to take away their stoniness of heart, etc. But after the First Advent a different arrangement began.

The Apostle is directing attention to the new feature of God's Plan—that during the Gospel Age He is calling out a special people. There will be no competition between the two classes—the new nation and the nation of Israel—for the promises given to Israel after the flesh were **earthly**, and the promises given to Israel after the spirit are **spiritual**. The **Jews** were a "peculiar people" (Deut. 14:2), a special people whom God had separated from the world; they were a chosen generation, or race. They were the generation, or race, of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. This special generation was recognized of God as His people, Jews, Israelites, through the Law Covenant, as well as through the preceding promises God had made to Abraham.

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.
Deuteronomy 14:2

But since Pentecost God has started this other work in the world—another generation —peculiar, separate, selected for a particular purpose. And this generation will all be holy—there will be none but holy ones in it! The other nation had a priesthood, but this new people is a **whole nation** of priests. We see how this description applies to the Church.

Israel purposed to be a holy nation, and in a typical way they were a holy nation. But

in a broad sense, the Church constitutes the holy nation—separate and distinct from humanity. We are a separate nation in every sense of the word—living in the midst of people of the world. We keep our laws and also their laws. We are obedient to the "powers that be," realizing that the Lord has permitted these and wishes us to be subject to them, wherever our consciences will not be sacrificed. The Lord tells us that as representatives of His Kingdom we are to make known His Message. He tells us that the world is in a rebellious condition because they have become blinded by the Adversary. And so He sends us as His ambassadors to tell men of His goodness, His Plan, which He purposes to work out, that the hearts of those who have an ear to hear His Message may turn to the Lord.

And we are a peculiar people in the sight of the Lord. This word **peculiar** signifies a **separate** people—implying that God had done something special for us. The Lord Jesus has purchased us. His merit—the purchase-price—has been applied on our behalf. The only ones for whom this purchase-price has as yet been applied are the spirit-begotten ones. The Apostle's Message is to these.

The Apostle Peter says that the Church is a people **for a purpose**; that is, God has a special object or purpose in selecting the Church. They are to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of **darkness** into His **marvelous light**," "that men may see their good works and glorify their Father which is in heaven." —1 Pet. 2:9; Matt. 5:16. This illumination comes, not only through the Truth, but also through the begetting of the holy Spirit. The holy Spirit becomes the illuminating power in the life of these. Their whole lives, therefore, should shine; their whole lives should show forth the light of him "who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light."

No other creature in heaven or in earth will ever receive from Christ those marks of special favor which are, and ever will be, the chief joy of his beloved bride. Though "the whole family of God in heaven and in earth" will be blessed through him, his wife co-operating with him in the work, she alone will be **his companion, his confidant, his treasure**. This close relationship of the Church to Christ was set forth in the Lord's words to his typical people (Deut. 14:2), which the Apostle Peter (1 Pet. 2:9) shows belonged, not to them, but to their antitypes, the elect Church. To them he said, "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and **the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself**, above all the nations that are upon the earth." And the Apostle, after showing that the typical people of God stumbled and proved themselves unworthy of such special favor, applies the promise to the Gospel Church, saying, But **ye** are the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which **in time past were not the people**, but **are now the people of God**. R. 5460, R. 5057, R. 4746, R. 1820

2:11-12 God-likeness certainly cannot include any harmful gossip, any unclean or unholy conversation, any disloyal or rebellious words. Let such things be put far away from all who name the name of Christ in sincerity and truth. And let us remember daily to settle our accounts with the Lord, to make sure that no record of idle words, unrepented of, and consequently unforgiven, stands against us.

Since God has called us to good works, we are to show great zeal, even though it bring upon us the envy and hatred and opposition of others. We are to rejoice, even if we are called to suffer persecution for His sake. And though the world does not appreciate these good works now, they will see and understand by and by, in their day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:12.) They will see that God's Plan was the best plan. The Church glorified will be the channel for blessing the world in general.

Only this peculiar people can now understand these things. Jesus said unto His disciples, "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them [the multitudes who went to hear Him] it is not given.

No one can have these blessings now except he can exercise faith; otherwise he does not have his day of visitation now. "We who believe" and "enter into rest" are having our "day of visitation." God has come to us now, and has adopted us into His family. And His Plan is that if it so be that we are willing to suffer with our Lord, we shall also reign with Him in glory. This is our visitation day of honor. Will the remainder of mankind have a day of visitation and honor? Most assuredly so; they will have opportunity to avail themselves of the redeeming work of our Savior. If their ears are not open now to hear and their eyes to see, the day will come when this will be so; if not now, in the blessed opportunity we have, then it will come by and by. R. 1938, R. 5462, R. 4993 *See also following comment.*

2:13-17 Our preferable position, the position most honorable to the Lord, toward society and toward ourselves—would be that which the Scriptures indicate, the position of aliens. (Psa. 39:12; 1 Pet. 2:11) Aliens must be obedient to the laws; so must we. Aliens must pay taxes according to the laws; so must we. Aliens may look for protection under the laws; so may we. But aliens would not feel compelled to fight against their own King, the allegiance which they recognize primarily; and we would prefer to be in the same position, so far as possible, for are not we "translated out of the kingdom of this world into the Kingdom of God's dear Son" —in its embryotic condition? Col. 1:13 Are not we subjects of the great King? And are not all the kingdoms of this world more or less identified with "the prince of this world," and his law of selfishness? Are not we, therefore, strangers and pilgrims here, and to some extent aliens and foreigners?

The Bible directs the followers of Jesus to be subject to the powers that be. (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17.) But while seeking to be thus law-abiding in every respect, Christians are to recognize that there is a still higher Law and a still higher Ruler, and are to be subject to the worldly powers only in the absence of a contrary admonition from the Higher Power—from God.

In viewing this whole subject we are forcibly reminded of the Apostle's counsel to the entire Church in their individual relationship to the powers that be, which are ordained of God— "Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to

whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. Owe no man anything, but to love one another." —Rom. 13:7,8.

Kings are not always personally worthy of honor; but honor is always due to the office, which is "ordained of God." (Rom. 13:1. See *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. I., chap. xiii., for the sense and purpose of their ordination.) Many of the magistrates ruling Judea in the days of the Lord and the Apostles were personally very unworthy of honor, yet the Lord and the apostles left us, not only their precepts, but also their example of submission to the authority thus represented: they were all respectful and law-abiding. —Matt. 17:27; Acts 25:8,10,11. F594, R. 5840, R. 1555

2:18-20 Beloved, let us examine ourselves, let us be very humble, lest the very words of self-congratulation and self-satisfaction which we consider in our hearts (if we do not utter them aloud) bring our condemnation. "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye [what merit is there in it]?" (Luke 6:33-38.) It is only when we "endure grief, suffering wrongfully," that our suffering is acceptable to God as a sacrifice of sweet incense. "What glory is it if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God; for even hereunto were ye called." (1 Pet. 2:19-21.) Beloved, let us see to it that our sufferings are for righteousness' sake only, and let us not charge God or our neighbors for tribulations resulting from the indulgence of our inherited or cultivated faults. R. 1938

2:21-22 Those who are new in the service of the Master might think for a time that matters should run smoothly for them, that they should not have the difficulties common to the world; that now as they were God's children He would protect them from afflictions and mistreatment. But as they study the Lord's Word, they soon see that this is not true; they see that they are to walk by faith, and not by sight. They learn that they are not to expect to have outward and tangible manifestations of His favor, but that they are to suffer with Christ—that hereunto they were called. (1 Peter 2:20,21; Acts 14:22.) They learn that they must be obedient, and they come to see what obedience means.

Justice never requires sacrifice. Thus discipleship and attainment with Jesus of a share in the sufferings of this present time and in the glory that shall follow mean something more than merely rendering to every man his due, for no one has a right to render to another less than his due, nor to do injury to another. Jesus not only did no injury, but, additionally, He sacrificed His own rights on behalf of mankind, and He set His disciples an example that they should walk in His steps. R. 5712, R. 5005

Key Reference: ***And they made His grave with the wicked---but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Isa. 53:9***

2:23 To be reviled is to be made to **appear vile**, to be evil spoken of, slandered. The natural tendency of all is to resent injustice, to render evil for evil, to give as good as we get—and a little more if possible. This is the natural inclination because we are in the fallen condition, unbalanced in our minds.

Our Lord's teaching is all the opposite of the spirit of reviling. No matter how much we are reviled, we are not to revile in return; no matter how much we are persecuted, we are not to persecute in return. This is the Law of the New Creation. Instead of reviling again, we are to **bless**.

The Lord's exhortation is that we seek to render good in return for the evil we receive, and includes our language as well as our conduct, we are not to give word for word, railing for railing, accusation for accusation, slander for slander any more than blow for blow. It includes also our very thoughts, for we are not even to render anger for anger, malice for malice, envy for envy. Two evils can never make a good—two wrongs will never make a right. Our sympathy for our blinded enemies is to cultivate our patience and forbearance toward them in thought, word and deed. —1 Pet. 2:21-23.
R. 5172, R. 3136

2:24 Key References: ***He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. Isa. 53:5***

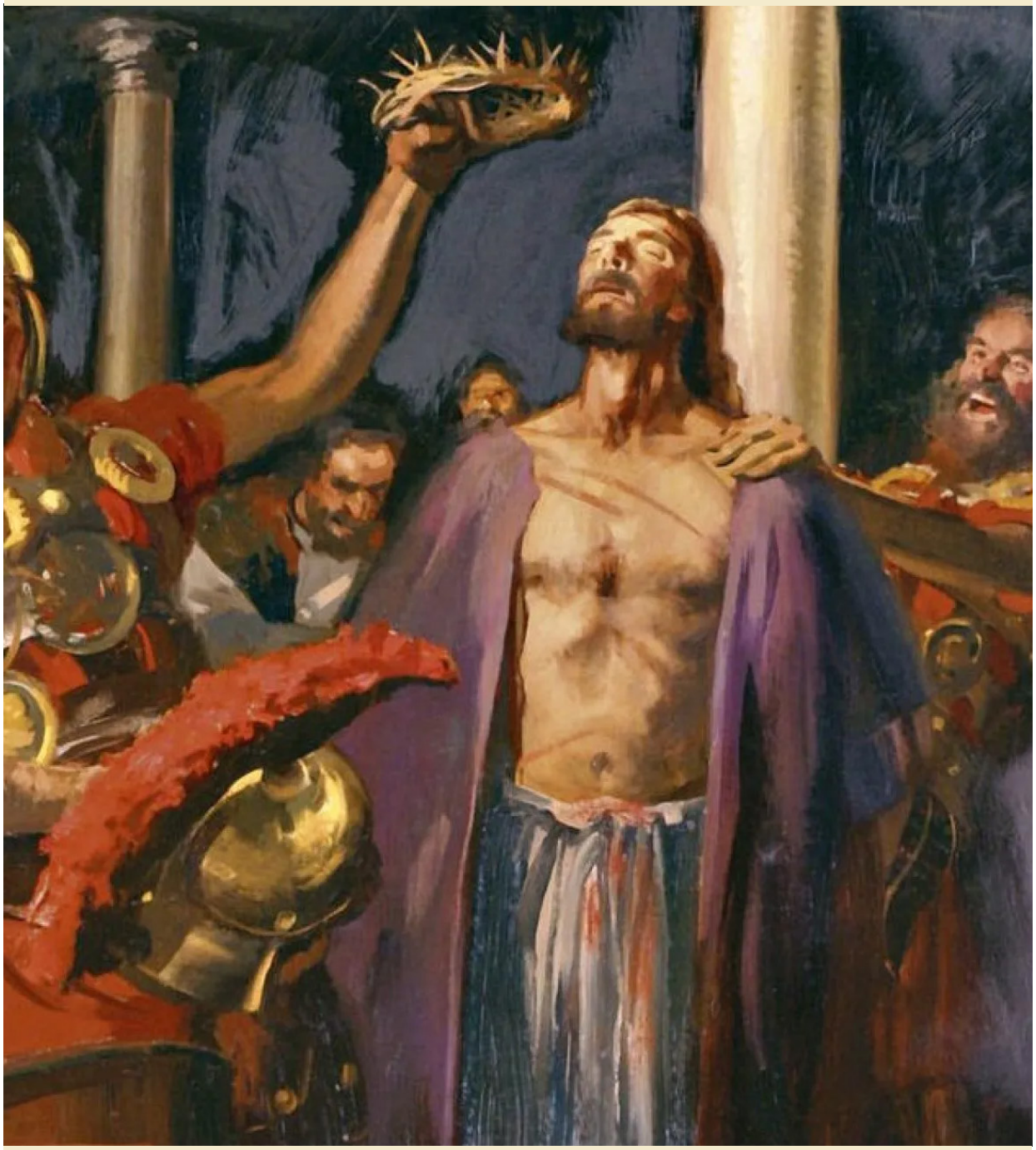
If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree. Deut. 21:22-23

Then the Apostle proceeds further to show that Christ, who knew no sin, was made a curse for the Jew; and that thus there is a special provision made by God to release the Jew from condemnation. The special sense in which Christ was made a curse for the Jew the Apostle has stipulated. (Gal. 3:13,14.) This was to hang upon a tree—the extreme penalty of the Law. (Deut. 21:23.) Christ was made a curse in that He died on the cross. (I Peter 2:24.) Such a death would not have been necessary for the salvation of the rest of mankind, but it was necessary for that of the Jew.

We are to remember, however, that as no Jew could keep the Law in its spirit, perfectly, neither could any of any other nationality keep it. The Jew's failure to keep the Law meant his failure to gain everlasting life, but we (the followers of Jesus) are not under the Law Covenant, but under Grace. We are to keep the Divine Law as nearly as we possibly can and to accept by faith God's arrangement for us in Jesus—that "by His stripes we are healed," our shortcomings are made good. R. 4868, R. 5005

2:25 Do not all realize that the Great Shepherd's great Son is our Shepherd also? It is the Shepherd-Son that the Apostle Peter declares to be "The shepherd and bishop of our souls." (1 Pet. 2:25; Heb. 13:20.) It is our Lord himself that declares, "I am the Good Shepherd." (John 10:11.) Not only so, but our word, "pastor," signifies shepherd, as does also the Greek word rendered "bishop" in our common version New Testament: and God, the Great Shepherd, "set" these in the Church, says the Apostle. R. 2431

**When He was reviled, He did not revile in return.
When He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.
1 Peter 2:23**



All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, every one, to his own way, and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. Isa. 53:6-7

1 Peter Chapter 3

1 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,

2 when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.

3 Do not let your adornment be merely outward---arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel---

4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

5 For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands,

6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

8 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another. Love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous,

9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

10 For "HE WHO WOULD LOVE LIFE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, LET HIM REFRAIN HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL, AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT.

11 LET HIM TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD. LET HIM SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT.

12 FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE ON THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ARE OPEN TO THEIR PRAYERS. BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

13 And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?

14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "AND DO NOT BE AFRAID OF THEIR THREATS, NOR BE TROUBLED."

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear,

16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

17 For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,

19 by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,

20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

21 There is also an antitype which now saves us---baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.

3:1-2 As the man who honors his wife honors himself, so the woman who reverences her husband honors herself. But this reverence of a husband as the lord or master or head of the household does not mean slavery, for the Church does not occupy toward the Lord a slavish position, nor exercise a slavish fear, but a reverence of love, of devotion—and this is the example.

This reverence for the husband does not imply that the wife should not exercise her judgment and bring to her husband's attention trials or difficulties or burdens too heavy for her, etc., but her presentation of her views, her hopes and desires should not be in a mandatory manner, but in a deferential way, which would recognize the headship of her husband and seek to be happy and contented with his decisions after having presented to him her thoughts on subjects of mutual interest. She should seek to be so considerate, so wise in the management of such of the household affairs as the husband would intrust to her, that she would earn more and more of his confidence, and be able more and more to fulfill in the home, whether large or small, the important duties of a helpmate. The thought that she is a helper, and her desire for her husband's approval, will be seen to be in strict harmony with the Apostle's suggestion respecting the Church's proper attitude toward the Lord, in faithfulness, and desire for his approval. But as in the Church it would be a crime to ignore the Head, the Lord, in any measure in connection with the work and its interests, so the wife should feel that her course would be criminal and in violation of her covenant were she to attempt to regulate the earthly home, and to any extent ignore the one whom she has vowed to reverence as the head of the family.

But what shall I do? says the Christian wife whose husband is not guided by Christian principles, except to the extent of claiming his presumed right to rule in selfishness. Well that would depend on circumstances: it would have been better if in your youth you had remembered the Apostle's counsel to marry only in the Lord; and you must now pay some penalty for your error. But in the first place you should remember not to violate conscience in order to please any one; for Peter says, "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29; 4:19,20.) But where conscience does not interpose its dictum, the Apostle gives to such wives the same counsel that he gives to servants who have unreasonable masters. (1 Pet. 2:18-23; 3:1,2.) To the servants he says, "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear [i.e., with caution, lest you offend]; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward;" this because it is better to suffer wrongfully than to be contentious, even for our rights. "For this is well-pleasing, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully; for what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." Then he points to the example of Christ in carrying out the same principle, saying, "For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also died for you, leaving you an example that ye should follow his steps;" (1 Pet. 2:21) and "the servant is not above his Lord." (Matt. 10:24.) Then he adds, "Likewise, ye wives [ye who have froward husbands], be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the Word, they may without the Word be won by the conduct of the wives, while they behold your chaste conduct coupled with fear [with carefulness to avoid giving offence]" —thus manifesting a spirit of loving forbearance, rather than of contention.
F498, R. 1553

3:3-4 We might argue with considerable force that nothing is too good for a true, faithful, noble child of God, who has consecrated life and all to the divine service. We might reason also that without doubt the angels of heaven and all of the heavenly arrangements are splendid and glorious in their appearance, and hence, that splendor represents the divine mind and will respecting God's people. Viewing the matter from this standpoint, we might at first be inclined to say that the members of the New Creation might properly adorn their mortal bodies with gold and jewels and costly array most lavishly; but before so deciding let us look at the other side of the question – at the reasons why the New Creatures should not adorn their mortal bodies lavishly, extravagantly:

1 Extravagant personal adornment naturally leads to more or less of pride; and we all know that a love of display, a love of appearing well before others, is a peculiar temptation to our fallen flesh, and very unfavorable to the cultivation of the spirit of meekness and humility. Hence, anything that would minister to pride and hinder the development of humility would be contrary to the interests of the New Creation.

2 The vast majority of the human family are hindered from any luxurious outward adornment by poverty, and so long as controlled by the natural mind they are sure to look enviously upon the rich, and especially upon those making ostentatious display of wealth. The spirit of love, therefore, would prompt the New Creation to consider the conditions and sentiments of others---not to provoke them to covetousness, envy, etc., nor to make their lives and lots seem bitter in comparison.

3 Every member of the New Creation has made a consecration of his all to the Lord and to his service, and to use whatever may come to him in the way of this world's goods as not abusing it, but in accordance with the pattern of him who has become our Redeemer and Leader and Lord. The pattern set is that of sacrifice – not only of influence and time, but also of means, wealth, etc. "He who was rich, for our sakes became poor." Every member of the New Creation, therefore, in proportion as he appreciates his covenant and seeks to live up to its conditions, can find better use for the money intrusted to his stewardship than in extravagant adornment, which might not only injure himself but provoke others injuriously.

We should hear the Lord's direction as to the place to put in our best efforts for the fight, and according to his direction this can best be done, not in fighting others, not in stirring up strife, not in words of anger and passion, but in fighting such a disposition in ourselves, in conquering our natural tendencies, in mortifying the flesh, with its affections and its desires, and its combativeness, and in cultivating in our own hearts the "meek and quiet spirit which in the sight of God is of great value." ---1 Pet. 3:4. F596, R. 2311

3:5-6 We are referred by Peter to Sarah, Abraham's wife, as a proper example of a wife's submission. But notice that, while she did reverence Abraham, as indicated by her calling him lord (Gen. 18:12), and while she, no doubt cheerfully, left her native land and friends and, in obedience to the command of God to her husband, accompanied him in his sojournings to the land of promise, with him walking by faith, we see that her submission was not a blind submission which refrained from expressing a thought which differed from Abraham's; nor was there anything in Abraham's conduct toward

her which indicated such expectation on his part. She was evidently a thinking woman: she believed the promise of God that they should have a son through whom the blessing of the world should come; and when nature seemed to fail she suggested a way in which the promise might be fulfilled. And when Hagar became boastful and despised her mistress, she complained to Abraham and claimed that the fault was partly his. She wanted no division of his heart with her servant. Abraham's reply assured her that there was no such division, that her maid was still under her control. And her subsequent course with Hagar was a discipline to correct her boastfulness and improper attitude toward her mistress. And when Hagar fled from her, the angel of the Lord met her and told her to return and submit herself to her mistress, which she did, and was evidently received and restored by Sarah. —Gen. 16.

On another occasion, after Isaac was born and the two boys were growing up together, the rivalry of Hagar again cropped out in Ishmael, who persecuted Isaac, Sarah's son. (Gen. 21:9; Gal. 4:29.) And again Sarah was grieved and appealed to Abraham to cast out the bond woman and her son; for she feared Abraham would make him heir with her son, which would not have been in accordance with the promise of God. (Gen. 21:10-12; 15:4; 17:17-19.) This, Abraham was not inclined to do, and as Sarah urged her claim, we read that "the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son," Ishmael, until God indicated his will in the matter.

This is further shown in this case to which Peter refers us for example, saying (to those who are similarly subject to their husbands) "whose daughters ye are, doing good, and not fearing any terror" —any evil results. (1 Pet. 3:6.) The submission counselled by the apostles is a reasonable submission, compatible with a moderate, modest expression of the wife's sentiments and a proper consideration of the same by the husband, as in the case of faithful Abraham, who was by no means led about by the whims of a foolish wife, but who, in a reasonable consideration of his wife's sentiments and trials, waited to know the will of the Lord before granting her wishes. R. 1553

3:7 While the wife is here specially counselled to imitate Christ's humility, the husband is urged to imitate Christ's generosity— "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them [your wives] according to knowledge [wisely and generously], giving honor unto the wife [taking pleasure in her progress and in all her noble attainments and achievements], as unto the weaker vessel [using your strength for her support and encouragement, and not for her oppression], and as being **heirs together** of the grace [the favors and blessings] of life."

The same spirit of submission, rather than of contention, is likewise enjoined upon the whole Church in its relationship to the civil ordinances of men. Thus Peter says, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake" —**i.e.**, so that his spirit or disposition may be manifest in you— "For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." (1 Pet. 2:13-17.) R. 1553

3:8-9 Harmony does not mean alike-ness. Rather it signifies unity with diversity: and this is the meaning of the Greek word translated "of one mind" in our text. The Lord's will respecting his people does not contemplate exact sameness, wholly ignoring individual

characteristics and peculiarities; on the contrary, a diversity with harmony is more desirable than a sameness; as, for instance, it is the harmonious union of the seven colors that constitutes the beauty of the rainbow. So also in music: one strikes a chord on the piano or the organ and the result is harmony, oneness, union—the variety of the notes gives a melody which could not be obtained from any one of them, or from a sameness of equal volume. This is the thought the Apostle's words give us in respect to God's people; they are of various natural temperaments and dispositions and peculiarities, and the divine alchemy by which the human is transmuted into the spiritual, the old mind into the new mind, does not wholly destroy, and is not intended to destroy, the elements of character and disposition; but is intended to take from each one its dross and imperfection and discordancy, and thus to permit all eventually to unite in and develop into a harmonious whole.

The Apostle Peter in our text points out that the Lord's followers should love as brethren —as proper brethren—as true brethren ought to love. He points out to them that this will mean tender-heartedness, humble-mindedness and forbearance to resent injuries and revilings. That the proper brotherly love would not only submit to all this without retaliation, but on the contrary would return a blessing. Oh, such love—such a high standard of love! How many of us, how few of us, have ever realized the standard of brotherly love that would be appreciated by our Lord—the standard that He demands as a condition of our being His brethren, the standard He implies in the prayer that He taught us, saying, "Forgive us our transgressions as we forgive those who trespass against us"!

Combative people will always (while in the flesh) feel a disposition to retaliate; but those who have learned of the Lord the lesson of self-control, and who have developed meekness and brotherly-kindness and pity, will thereby be prepared to fulfil the demands of our text, —to not render evil for evil, or railing for railing. And looking to the Lord as the pattern they will see how it was with him, that "When he was reviled he reviled not again." Not because his enemies had found in him something that could properly and justly be reviled and evil spoken of; —nor because his enemies were so nearly perfect that he could find nothing in them to revile and speak evil of; but because he was so full of submission to the divine will that he was enabled to take the scoffs and railings of the people, and to bear these humbly and patiently, and to remember that even hereunto he was called, that he should endure patiently and learn the lessons, and prove himself faithful, and develop and demonstrate his true character, and feel and manifest his pity for the people, in their blindness and ignorance, and his love for them.

And so it must be with us as we grow in our Lord's character-likeness. We also will be less disposed to rail at those who rail, and to revile those who revile us. We also will be ready to suffer the loss of all things, and to do so with cheerfulness; yea, even to rejoice in the trials and difficulties of this present time, knowing, as the Apostle declares, that these are working out for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory. We note here the harmony between Peter's statement of this matter and our Lord's statement of it: "Bless them that curse you; bless and curse not" (Phil. 3:8; 2 Cor. 4:17; Matt. 5:44; Rom. 12:14). So the Apostle says we should rather render blessing. If we have not yet attained to this high standard which is at the end of the race, the mark of perfect love, where we love our enemies and are ready and willing and anxious to bless them, to help them, to

desire their uplifting out of darkness and degradation, and to wish and do all that we can in harmony with this, the divine plan, let us not be discouraged; but let us press onward, that as soon as possible we may reach this point, which is the mark of perfected character. For, as the Apostle says, "even hereunto we were called, that we might inherit a blessing." R. 2877, SM703

3:10-12 Key Reference: ***Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. Psa. 34:12-16***

Concerning our Lord Jesus, whose heart was perfect—in whom was no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, it was said, "Grace is poured into thy lips;" and again, "All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth." (Psa. 45:2; Luke 4:22.) Thus our Lord left a worthy example to his people, which the Apostle urges all to follow, saying, "Let your speech be always with grace [with manifest love and kindness], seasoned with salt [a purifying and preservative influence]." (Col. 4:6.) And Peter adds, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God," —wisely, and in accordance with the spirit and Word of the Lord. Again, it is written, "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile [deceit]."

The thought which this promise of the abiding presence of the Father and Son conveys to our minds is that their thought and care and interest will be constantly upon us, and that at any instant we may engage the special attention of either or both. The same idea is also conveyed by the words of the Apostle Peter (1 Pet. 3:12)—"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers." And we are urged to be "instant in prayer," to "pray always, and not to faint," to "pray without ceasing;" for "Like as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." "As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him," and "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Yea, "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children, to such as keep his covenant and to those that remember his commandments to do them." —Rom. 12:12; Luke 18:1; 1 Thes. 5:17; Psa. 103:13,14,11,12,17,18.

We cannot come too often, then, to the throne of the heavenly grace, if we are of those who can claim the abiding presence of the Father and the Son—if we are of them that love him and keep his commandments and who recognize the Lord Jesus as the only way of access to the Father. R. 1937, R. 1865

3:13 We are to endure "as seeing him who is invisible." Greater is he that is with us than all that be against us. (Heb. 11:27; 1 John 4:4-8.) "Who is he that will harm you [really], if ye be followers of that which is good?" (Read 1 Pet. 3:13-16; Rom. 8:31-39.) The opposition of evil can work only good to "the elect," those who are called according to God's purpose. To all who are of the true Zion the promise is, "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper."

3:14 Key Reference: ***Do not say, 'A conspiracy,' concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow. Let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. Isa. 8:12-13***

3:15 The faithful student of the Word should be able always to give a reason for his hope. The Word of God alone is able to make wise, and is profitable for doctrine, instruction, etc., "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished." (1 Pet. 3:15; 2 Tim. 3:15-17) Only this one storehouse contains an exhaustless supply of things both new and old—meat in due season for the household. Surely no one who believes the Scripture statement that "the path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day" will claim that the perfect day came in Luther's time; and if not, we do well that we take heed to our lamp as unto "a light that shineth in a dark place UNTIL THE DAY DAWN." 2 Pet. 1:19

Because so many Christian people ignore the proper definition of faith many candid minds are repelled from Christianity, refusing, they tell us, to believe absurdities. We urge Christian people to a more rigid examination of their faith in God and in the Bible, that, as the Apostle says, We may be able to "give a reason for the hope [the faith], that is within us." (I Pet. 3:15.) We owe this to ourselves, as well as to those whom we would endeavor to interest in God's Word. In the light now shining upon God's Word it is possible, as it was in the days of the Apostles, for the man of God to be "thoroughly furnished" and able "to rightly divide the Word of Truth" and to show to his friends and neighbors solid, logical grounds for each item of his faith. A25, R. 4588

3:16-17 ***What is evil speaking?***
We answer: That to speak anything that is derogatory respecting another, to tell things uncomplimentary of them, is evil speaking. Some have the impression that evil speaking is lying and consider that speaking the truth is always in order. This is a misconception. The speaking of anything that is prejudicial to the character of another, whether it be truth or falsehood, is evil speaking in the proper acceptance of that term. The Lord's Spirit, as well as his Word, forbids evil speaking because the Lord's Spirit is the spirit of love and kindness, and evil speaking, true or false, is repudiated by love, is contrary to love, is born of some evil motive, either busy-bodying and gossiping, or, worse still, malice, envy or strife, and all of these the Apostle designates in his list of "the works of the Devil." R. 4281

- *See also notes for 1 Peter 2:11-12*

3:18 That this sacrifice was for us, the Church, and for all mankind, is likewise very clearly set forth in the Scriptures: "He, by the grace of God tasted death for every man," the just for the unjust, to bring us to God—to open up for us and for all mankind a way of return or reconciliation to harmony with the Heavenly Father, and thus indirectly to open up for us the way back to eternal life, the Father's favor or blessing or gift for all those who are truly his children. On this point see the following: 1 Thes. 5:10; Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:14,15; John 10:15; 11:50-52; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Pet. 3:18.

God's compassion provided the Savior, who paid for us the very penalty against us—that in his flesh he "suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18): that he did not suffer eternal torment, but the very penalty against us; viz., eternal death. Although the flesh of Christ was thus given up eternally, as man's ransom price, God nevertheless raised him from the dead, giving him a new life, a new being,—making him a "new creature;" and that accordingly he is no longer a man in the flesh, but is again a spirit being, now of the divine nature, far above angels, principalities and powers. —Eph. 1:21; 1 Pet. 3:22.

He who condemned us as unfit for eternal life has provided for our redemption; that His Son became our Redeemer; that Christ died, the "Just for the unjust," that He might bring all back into harmony with God. E446, R. 3167. R. 4973

3:19 This text has been made the basis for some peculiar presentations. From it some have deduced an intermediate state lasting between death and the resurrection. Others have claimed it as an authority for the doctrine of Purgatory. The difficulty in every case seems to be the failure to remember that the Bible always and everywhere teaches that the dead are really **dead**, that they know nothing, and that, therefore, it would be impossible to do any preaching to the dead humans. Undoubtedly the theory that people are more alive after they die than when they were alive is responsible for nearly all of the foolish things which we have all at some time professed to believe.

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

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

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

Turning to Genesis 6:1-5, we find there the cause of the disobedience of those angels, who for a time had been permitted to see what they could do for the uplift of humanity, or, rather, permitted to demonstrate that the downward tendency of sin is incurable except in the manner which God has already arranged through Messiah and His glorious reign.

Instead of those angels helping mankind out of sin they helped themselves into sin, and by so doing they increased the depravity amongst humanity until the astounding record is that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually."

It was then and there that God imprisoned those spirits, angels, who kept not their first estate, and are therefore called fallen angels, devils, demons. They were not imprisoned in some far-off world called hell, nor are they engaged there in stoking fires for the torture of poor humanity. The record is that God cast them down, that He condemned them to an overthrow—that they might not any longer associate with the holy angels, but must be reserved in **tartarus**—our earth's atmosphere. Here they were imprisoned, not in a special place, but in the sense of having their liberties restrained, "in chains of darkness." They were no longer permitted to materialize and thus to associate with humanity. These things are distinctly told us by St. Jude and St. Peter (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4,5) —an explanation in full harmony with the Genesis account of their fall.

If Jesus was really dead, as the Scriptures declare, if "He poured out His soul unto death," and "made His soul an offering for sin," and His soul was not raised from the dead until the third day after His crucifixion, how could He in the meantime preach to spirits in prison, or to anybody else?

He could preach in the same way that the Apostle refers to in respect to Abel, saying, "He, being dead, yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4); and again, in the same way that the blood of Abel is said to have cried to God—**figuratively**. Of one thing we are sure, namely, that Jesus gave no oral address while He was dead. He preached in the way we sometimes refer to when we say, "Actions speak louder than words."

It was the great object lesson which the fallen angels saw that constituted to them the great sermon that gave them a ground for hope. His sermon to them was complete, namely, that "the wages of sin is death," but that "the gift of God is eternal life." (Romans 6:23.) And as they realized thus the Power of God and the Love of God for His human creatures, the Apostle's words imply that this constituted to them a message of hope. Perhaps if they would show full contrition God eventually would have mercy upon them, even as He had had mercy and had provided for humanity.

The lesson is one for all. God's power is Infinite, so is His love, His mercy, His goodness. Nevertheless, every willful sin will have its punishment, a just recompense of reward, and only the willing and obedient shall have the Divine favor and everlasting life. Let each apply the lesson to himself. R. 5044

3:20-21 We see from the context that the Apostle Peter has in mind the great Deluge. He reminds his readers that all mankind perished in the Flood save eight souls, who were preserved from a watery grave by means of the Ark which God provided them. That Ark, though submerged in water, was their salvation. St. Peter declares that this is a "like figure to baptism." We are to notice that those who were saved in the Deluge were not saved from eternal torment, and that a like figure of salvation would not indicate that the Church is saved from eternal torment by their baptism into Christ. Noah and his family were

saved from death; and the Church of Christ are likewise saved from death through their baptism.

To the Christian mind it is quite sufficient attestation to the truthfulness of the account of the deluge, as given in Genesis, that our Lord, the great Teacher, made no criticism of it, but by referring to it clearly implied its truthfulness and general correctness. And the evidence is still further strengthened by the fact that the Apostle Peter refers to it, and under the guidance of the holy spirit shows that it marked the close of the first dispensation, —as a great cataclysm of trouble, anarchy, symbolically called "fire," will mark the termination of the present dispensation, and prepare the way for the new era, called the new heavens and the new earth. —Matt. 24:37-39; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5; 3:6,7.

Key Reference: ***As the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Matt. 24:37-39***

We find here (1 Pet. 3:20) a reference to Noah, and the suggestion that Noah and his family saved in that flood typified or represented the Gospel Church saved in the flood or calamity which is about to overwhelm the world. This seems a further corroboration of our Lord's intimations and becomes the more impressive, especially as Peter is describing the incidents connected with the ending of this age and the inauguration of this new dispensation, just as did Jesus in his reference to Noah's day. Peter says that the Ark salvation "was a like figure whereunto baptism doth now save us."

What is the figure?

We reply that the flood of water which there submerged the world meant the death of the world, while Noah and his family although submerged in the same water were hidden in the Ark, and thus by the Ark their lives were spared. Similarly here we who are baptized into Christ, who become members of his body, enter the Ark of safety, although we are baptized into his death according to the flesh, are raised or saved, and on the other side the flood, on the other side the great calamity of death, in the new dispensation, in the "new earth" which the Scriptures describe, we shall live and be the representatives of God in establishing the new order of things. It is in harmony with this that the Scriptures represent Jesus as the Father of the everlasting age—the Life-Giver to all who will ever attain life eternal. All lost their lives through disobedience, through sin; our Lord Jesus paid the ransom price redeemed us with his own precious life, and proposes to succor, to give life to as many as will obey him. The whole period of the Millennial age is apportioned to this opportunity, and we who now accept of his grace are to be made participants with him in that glorious work—as the Bride, the Lamb's Wife.

Noah's Ark represented Christ. Whoever comes into Christ comes into safety and salvation, out of danger and destruction. All who come into this relationship to God in Christ are said to have "passed from death unto life." —John 5:24.

Salvation through the Ark was one figure of the salvation of the Church through baptism into Christ; baptism in water is another. There is a correspondence between these two figures. Noah and his family were submerged in literal water. Candidates for baptism are also submerged in literal water. But in neither case was it the water that saved. Nor is it the outward baptism that saves us, except in a figure. It represents the real. But the figure is not in washing away the filth of the flesh (the body) in water. And the filth of our flesh as New Creatures can be washed away only by the grace of God in Christ, "by the washing of water by the Word"; it is a gradual process after we become New Creatures. So neither of these is what is prefigured in water baptism.

Our text is pointing out to us a peculiar baptism, not a baptism that washes the flesh clean, either literally or figuratively, but "the answer [the response] of a good conscience toward God." What has God said to which we should respond? We reply that our Heavenly Father has called us, invited us, to a wonderful Heavenly inheritance, and we respond by accepting His proposition. He has invited us to be a separate people. Just exactly as God said to Noah and his family that they should be saved by gathering into the Ark, so He says to all who are invited during this Gospel Age, "Gather My saints together unto Me, those who have made a Covenant with Me by Sacrifice." —Psa. 50:5.
SM341, R. 2843, R. 3935, SM342

3:22 It was by his sufferings, death and resurrection that the preaching was done. Thus, as Jesus went from step to step in his work, **his course** was preaching a good sermon to those angels who once had been placed in control of man, and had themselves fallen, instead of lifting up mankind. In Jesus they saw exemplified obedience even unto death, and its reward – resurrection to spiritual being of the divine nature. Such was the great text; and the lesson from it is stated by the Apostle (1 Pet. 3:22), viz., that Jesus was now highly exalted and given a name (title) above every name, that he was "gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God [the position of highest favor]; **angels** and authorities and powers being **made subject to him**." They knew Jesus before he left the glory of the heavenly condition and became a man. They knew the object of his self-sacrifice as a man. They saw him obedient even unto death, and then that his high exaltation came as a reward. (Phil. 2:9.) They must have felt keenly their loss through disobedience, being cut off from communion with God, restrained as unworthy of former liberty and communion with the purer minded of mankind, and their own future an unsolved mystery. We can but imagine that sorrow and chagrin filled their hearts, as they contrasted their course of disobedience and its results with our Lord's obedient course and its grand results.
R. 1679

1 Peter Chapter 4

1 Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

2 that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

3 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles---when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.

5 They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

6 For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

7 But the end of all things is at hand. Therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "LOVE WILL COVER A MULTITUDE OF SINS."

9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you,

13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.

15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.

16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God, and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

18 Now "IF THE RIGHTEOUS ONE IS SCARCELY SAVED, WHERE WILL THE UNGODLY AND THE SINNER APPEAR?"

19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

4:1-2 The Apostle's argument is that dead people cannot sin; and that the Lord's consecrated ones, having devoted themselves even unto death, already reckon themselves "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:11.) We have become followers of him who, realizing the sinfulness of sin, and that the whole human family was hopelessly under its control, gave himself even unto death, that he might redeem us from sin and its wages—death. If we appreciate our Lord and his work, his love for righteousness, and his sacrifice on our behalf; and if we desire to be truly his disciples, followers in his footsteps, it will mean that we will "arm ourselves with the same mind" that he had—the same opposition to sin, the same determination to lay down our lives in opposition to it, and in endeavors to assist in delivering those who are under its control. Not that any sacrifice of ours could effect the cancellation of the divine sentence, but that our Lord's sacrifice, being quite sufficient to accomplish this, we are privileged to show our devotion to him and to the principles governing his conduct: the inducement being held out to us that those who suffer with him shall share also his glory, his Kingdom, his immortality.

Those who have made such a consecration unto death, in opposition to sin, will certainly not commit sin **willfully**, for to do so would prove that their wills had changed—that they were no longer begotten of the new will, the new mind, the holy Spirit or disposition, but had become alive again as the servants of sin. Such a course would prove that such persons had ceased to be New Creatures, and the loss of this new life to them would mean the Second Death. But so long as they remain willingly faithful to their vows of fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, in his opposition to sin—so long as they remain thus reckonedly dead to sin and reckonedly alive as New Creatures, they have no sin. The thought is that the new **will** is counted the New Creature, separate and distinct from the flesh, so that while the will, the heart, is fully loyal to the Lord, in opposition to sin, the flesh is reckoned dead to sin. R. 3246

4:3-4 The "time past of our lives," referred to in vss. 3 and 4, was the time when we were natural men, before we became New Creatures, begotten of the Lord's Spirit. That time past, and that past experience of life, sufficeth us—we want no more of it, we have found a better life. We would not return to the former condition of natural-mindedness and alienation from God under any consideration. The list of excesses mentioned by the Apostle—lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelries, carousings and abominable idolatries—were not the same with all of us; and yet there is a certain amount of correspondency in every case. Some of the early Christians were lifted by the Lord's grace out of very deep degradation of mind and body, and some of the Lord's people of today have been similarly lifted from the depths of Satan and sin, while still others, never having been so deeply degraded, were not lifted from such great depths. However, all who have the new mind of full consecration to the Lord can realize a great change from the mind or disposition which was theirs naturally.

While those who seek for earthly offices of a brief tenure and comparatively small dignity are willing to sacrifice time, energy, money, etc., to attain these petty offices and honors, and while they can arouse enthusiasm among their friends and neighbors, leading to the expenditure of time, money and energy to an astounding degree, and though they think it strange that we "run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of us" (1 Pet. 4:4), nevertheless, they affect to think it remarkable that we who are candidates

for the superlatively high office for which God has nominated us should spend time, influence and means in making our calling and election sure, and in assisting "brethren" in their election work; they consider our time wasted.

We are, therefore, **to purchase** and **to secure out** of the evil time, and apart from these unfavorable influences, as large a proportion of time as may be possible for devotion to higher interests—our own spiritual sustenance and strengthening, and for the assistance of others in spiritual things. Such purchase will cost us something of self-denial, of gratification of our own natural appetites and tendencies, and something also of the good opinion and fellowship of others, who will "think it strange" that we run not with them to the same excesses as formerly. R. 3247, R. 3585, E431

4:5-6 The fifth verse according to our Common Version seems to refer to those who speak evil, and to say that they will be obliged to give an account in the day of judgment—in the Millennial Day, when they will be on trial. This is undoubtedly true. As our Lord declared, every act and word done in injury of the Lord and his faithful will receive a just recompense of reward—justly proportionate to the amount of their wilfulness in the matter. But there is another way of viewing this verse, equally true, viz., by connecting it with the preceding verse, so as to have it read, "Speaking evil of **you who shall give an account** to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." This last thought seems more fully in accord with the entire testimony of the Word on the subject. It is we, the Church, who are expecting shortly to give such an account. It is we who are being specially tried and tested during the present time, because to us the light and knowledge and opportunity have come in advance of the world. This is our trial time, and the Lord's judgment or decision with reference to who shall constitute the very elect, and respecting who shall be accounted worthy of joint heirship with the Lord, is the very decision that is to be rendered.

The Apostle continues with this thought, saying that it is for this reason (because we who are dead to the world and alive toward God are being called out now, as the Lord's elect class, therefore) the Gospel is preached **to us who are** (thus) **dead**, so that while the world judges us as in the flesh, like all other men, the Lord may judge us as in the spirit, begotten to a newness of life.

This is in exact accord with what we saw in the first two [verses] of this lesson. The world discerns not that the New Creatures are any different from other men; hence it wonders at their devotion, calls it folly or hypocrisy, and discerning the imperfections of the flesh may not at all times be able to see so great a difference between the New Creatures and the world. But God, who knoweth the heart, and who has from the moment of our consecration counted the flesh as dead, and who charges nothing against us as New Creatures, begotten spirit beings, except that which is **willfully** wrong, is the One with whom we have to do, and in whose favor and love and promises we rejoice. God is "for us"! None can prevail against us; all things must work together for good to us, because we are his, because he has called us according to his purpose, because we are seeking to walk in his way, not **after** the flesh, but **after** the spirit. R. 3247

4:7 The end of all present things is near. Present institutions, under the supervision of "the prince of this world" (Satan), and controlled largely by his spirit, must soon, according to the divine promise, give place to the new conditions of God's Kingdom, when the great Redeemer shall take to himself his great power and reign—binding Satan and putting down all insubordination and everything contrary to the righteousness which is of God. We who so believe can look with great equanimity upon the changing conditions of this present time; and the evil-speaking of the world and its antagonism manifested toward us in various ways, because we are New Creatures, walking after the spirit to the extent of our ability, need not alarm us, for greater is he who is on our part than all that be against us. Hence it behooves us to be sober-minded—to take this reasonable and proper view, which does not overlook the future to see the present, but rather overlooks the present to see the future.

Remembering that eighteen centuries have passed since Peter gave this counsel to the church, he might be considered as somewhat premature in regard to the proximity of the time of the end; but considering the great week which commenced with the creation of man and ends with his full restitution to the image and favor of God, each of whose days is a thousand years (2 Pet. 3:8), and that Peter was living in the fifth day of this great week, we see that from this standpoint his words were true. The end of the old order of things—the end of the dominion of evil, is to be in the close of the sixth day (the sixth thousand years), and thus was indeed at hand, as was also the second coming of the Lord and the setting up of his kingdom.

While this and all similar expressions, referring to their time as the last days, were thus true then, the apostle himself probably did not so understand it; for the significance of the time-prophecies was in all probability wisely hidden from their view, as it was from the prophets, since the length of a single one of these days would have seemed very long and consequently a cause of discouragement to them. But the spirit which inspired the words of the apostles and prophets could see that while from God's standpoint the end of all things was at hand in the fifth day of the week, and these words were, therefore, true in this sense when declared to the early church, would also be true from the human standpoint when fully understood by the church in the end of the age.

In view of these things, how apt the Apostle's counsel to watchfulness and sobriety; for what a lamentable calamity it would be to any of the saints, who had thus far run well for the prize of their high calling, to become discouraged and falter and fail when so near the realization of their glorious hope. Let us, therefore, be sober; let us guard against the worldly spirit and its stupefying and intoxicating influence upon our spiritual life. Refuse the first draught of the wine of worldly-mindedness and you will not be tempted to take the second. If you take the first, it may revive the old appetite and thus quickly and suddenly precipitate your fall. Therefore, watch unto prayer: pray for divine assistance, to resist even the slightest encroachment of the enemy, and bear in mind that to the watchful and prayerful is promised grace sufficient to overcome the world.
R. 3247, R. 1187

With this timely counsel the Apostle then proceeds to show us *how* to cultivate the spirit of Christ, saying:

Above all things have fervent love for one another, for "LOVE WILL COVER A MULTITUDE OF SINS."
– 1 Peter 4:8 –

Key Reference: ***Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins. Pro. 10:12***

Love is one of the first essentials of the Christian character, and while Christians must love all men as God loves them—not always for what they are, but for what they shall be when character shall have been developed and made perfect—yet they can love each other in a much higher sense, as those in whom the God-likeness is already developing and perfecting. If such cannot love each other whom they see, how can they love God whom they see not? Love to God may be rightly judged an empty profession, if it find no expression toward those possessing his spirit and likeness. Among these love should have glowing, fervent and constant expression. Love so fervent, considering the imperfections of the earthen vessel and yet the strivings of the spirit to overcome, can cover a multitude of sins—of short-comings and failures to measure up to our highest ideas of moral excellence. And while thus regarded of one another we are so regarded of God who also looketh upon the heart, and noting there the warm impulses of love toward him and his, excuses all our unwillful sins through the merit of our Redeemer. "Love," said the Apostle, "is the fulfilling of the law;" consequently, if we have pure and fervent love, and if we walk not after the flesh but after the spirit, the law is reckoned as fulfilled in us. (Rom. 13:10; 8:1.) Therefore, above all things have fervent love among yourselves; and let it be manifested in the use of "hospitality one toward another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift [the favors of life], even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." R. 1188

Anything injurious to the real interests of another should never be spoken. We cannot be too careful of our words concerning others. There seems to be a tendency with some of the Lord's children to indulge in confidences with others of the brethren and to relate incidents that *reflect* upon another brother or sister, that *show up* certain manifestations of weakness in that one. The disposition that thus exposes the imperfections of the brethren is *surely not* the love that *covers*. R. 5530

4:9 There is probably nothing better calculated to cement and knit together the body of Christ than Christian hospitality—the fellowshiping of members of the body of Christ and ministering to one another the temporal and spiritual favors. However humble those favors may be, they give evidence of the love that prompts the dispensing of them. Those who have much of this world's good things, who have a well ordered and comfortable home-life, have good opportunities for this kind of service; and while some of those in less favored circumstances might hesitate to show the hospitality they feel toward those more favored, such advances on the part of the latter class quickly show that the class distinctions based upon relative degrees of wealth or pedigree, etc., which obtain in the world, find no recognition in the body of Christ, where all are one. And those in humble circumstances will have no pride of rivalry, etc., to sustain, but in simplicity and love will delight to manifest the hospitality they feel toward both those in more and those in less favored circumstances—to minister to them both of their temporal and their spiritual good things according to their several needs, as good and faithful stewards of the manifold grace of God. R. 1188

4:10 The Lord's grace and bounty are manifold; they come to us in numberless forms, in things both spiritual and temporal. Some of us may receive a larger number of these favors than others, but in that event the responsibility or stewardship is proportionately increased; and the Apostle urges (vs. 10) that we should seek to serve out to others whatever gifts we possess. He who waters others shall himself be watered. This principle applies to everything, both temporal and spiritual. R. 3247

4:11 Still speaking of this Church class, dead to the world, and judged by the world as though they were men, but alive toward God, and judged by God as New Creatures, spirit beings merely sojourning in these fleshly bodies, as in a tent, and waiting in this wilderness condition to learn the lessons necessary before entering the land of promise, the heavenly Canaan, by sharing the First Resurrection, the Apostle proceeds to point out that these, when they **speak**, should be as "God's oracles," absolutely truthful, wholly reliable. If they **serve** they should do it with all the ability which they possess, recognizing that the ability is God-given as well as the talent. These exhortations to truth and faithfulness in utterance and service are applicable first of all to believers (the Church) amongst ourselves, but applicable also to all with whom they come in contact.

In attempting to teach others—for all who have the truth are commissioned to declare it to others—let us remember the Apostle's counsel: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." To teach what we claim to be divine truth, even in the humblest way, is to incur great responsibility; for in so doing we stand as God's representatives.

Let us, therefore, be zealous for the truth, in declaring the glorious things to come, according to God's revealed plan, but take heed that we be not of those "foolish prophets that follow their own spirit and have seen nothing." Let us have confidence in the sure word of the Lord and with humble boldness declare it and with zeal and vigor, and as loyal soldiers of the cross defend it against every opposing device of error,

that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

R. 3247, R. 1357

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you, but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.
– 1 Peter 4:12-13 –



Shield of Faith by Steve Goad

Like water upon the parched earth, and like sunshine to vegetation after winter snows, so the message of divine truth comes to us and with it the blessed realization of divine favor. In the joy of our new-found treasure we are apt to think at first that we have actually entered the Beulah land of joy and peace where sorrow and trial can never more come to us. But no; there are sorrows ahead and trials beyond, and you will need all the strength which the truth can give and all the blessed influences that divine grace can impart to enable you to endure faithfully to the end.

But do not stop to worry about the trials until they come; only remember the Apostle's words —– "Think it not strange," when they do come. They come to prove you and to strengthen your character and to cause the principles of truth and righteousness to take deep root in your heart. They come like fiery darts from our great enemy, Satan, whose wrath against the children of light is permitted to manifest itself in various ways; but his darts cannot injure those who securely buckle on the divinely provided armor of truth and righteousness. "Wherefore," says the Apostle, "take unto you the whole armor of God,...above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." ––––Eph. 6:13-17. R 1744

4:12-14 The Scriptures inform us that the period of time during which the present dominion of Satan shall become the Kingdom of God's dear Son, will be a specially evil day. It will be a season in which all the children of light shall be crucially tested; a day that will try every man's faith and work; a day of fiery trial through which only "the gold, the silver and the precious stones" will pass unharmed and in which all the "wood, hay and stubble" of error, sin and human tradition will be entirely consumed. —1 Cor. 3:12,13; 1 Pet. 4:12.

The Lord's people should thoroughly understand the terms and conditions upon which they have been called. They should therefore not think it strange when trials come upon them, no matter how fiery, no matter how severe. The Apostle Peter lovingly counsels the Church in these verses (1 Peter 4:12-14.) The Lord is to be not only the Instructor, but also the Refiner to purge out the dross, that we may be made ready to share with Christ in the Kingdom of "glory, honor and immortality." —Rom. 2:7.

It is impossible to rejoice in persecution until we get the right focus on the subject. We cannot do this of ourselves, and need, therefore, to take the matter to the Lord and confer with Him. After we have had "a little talk with Jesus," our faith takes hold on Him. The Apostle Paul tells us that we are to be exceeding glad and joyful in persecution and affliction for Christ. The Apostle Peter also declares, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. On their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified."

the Truth and those who have the Spirit of the Truth, and who follow the Lord's instruction, letting their lights shine, will now incur hatred and persecution. And if some, for these reasons, and while doing their best to speak the truth in love, suffer therefor, happy are they, for as the Apostle said, "The Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you." They have this witness of the Spirit to their faithfulness in the narrow way.
R. 5097, R. 5118, R. 5544, E237

4:15 Assuredly none of the Lord's people could willingly be evil-doers. He who would willfully do evil would not have the Lord's Spirit, but that of the Adversary. Such being the case, the worst that could be said against any of the truly consecrated surely would be that he had been overtaken in a fault, or that he had some weakness of the flesh, or that by the snare of the Adversary he had been led into doing something which his heart disapproved. But evil deeds, even though unintentional, are to be guarded against carefully. "Let none of you suffer as an evil-doer" —not one—at any time—under any circumstances.

But now we come to the second part of the Apostle's warning—**busybodying**. The saints seem as liable as others to become busybodies and to suffer for so doing. We have sometimes thought that the Lord's consecrated people are more inclined to be busybodies than are others. They have higher standards than others. Their love of righteousness is greater than before, and their hatred of iniquity is greater. There is continually a temptation, therefore, not to be content with minding one's **own business**, but to advise and to seek to regulate everybody and everything.

Our experience is that busybodying is a fruitful source of difficulty in the Church—in all the ecclesias. We are mentioning it because a great many of the Lord's dear people who

mean the very best do not know what busybodying is while they are doing it. Mind **your own** affairs! If you get too busy watching **others**, the Adversary will take advantage of **you**. So long as the outward conduct of any brother or sister is reasonable and fair, Justice and Love both say that you should not meddle with them, in the sense of trying to mind **their** business. Content yourself with setting them a good example of meekness, faith, patience, brotherly-kindness, love. Then if they ever need advice, they may voluntarily come to you. And then will be your time to show your moderation and to give them advice as an oracle of God, in harmony with Matthew 18:15-17—and **nothing more**. R. 5274

4:16 Certainly a Christian is not to be ashamed of what he may suffer because of his loyalty to the Lord, to the Truth and to the brethren. In these sufferings he is to glorify God and to be thankful for them. He is to be glad for the opportunity of enduring something, to show not only the Lord, but himself also that he has endured something for Christ's sake. Every sacrifice that we make is for the purpose of suffering as a Christian, and we are not to be ashamed so to suffer. —1 Peter 4:16.

There are others who suffer more or less as Christians suffer, but they are suffering from a worldly standpoint. People sometimes say, "This worldly man has his trials and sufferings, and shows such patience, such resignation, that surely he is suffering as a Christian." But we do not understand that anyone can suffer as a Christian unless he takes the steps necessary to make him a Christian. We are to view matters from God's standpoint. Doubtless many have suffered as Christians from a human viewpoint who were not Christians.

The **world** has persecutions of a certain sort. People in business will sometimes persecute one another. Sometimes persecutions are in a political way. The Lord indicates to the Church that we may rejoice in any persecution, especially if we are in no way **blameworthy.** "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed [feel disgraced]," said the Apostle. (1 Pet. 4:14-16.) He is suffering because the "darkness hateth the light," and slanders the Truth. This has been so from Jesus' time all the way down. R. 5118, R. 5779

4:17 The Scriptures assure us that the great hour of trial coming upon the whole world must begin with the Church— "with the house of God" —with those professing to be saints. St. Peter implies this when he says, "If it begin first at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" (1 Pet. 4:17.) St. Paul gives the same thought, saying of the Church, "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it; because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Cor. 3:13.) The intimation is that the severity of the testing will come first to the saints.

The authoritative course of the Lord upon this occasion, in overthrowing the tables of the money-changers in the temple (Matt. 21:12,13), saying, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves," as a typical act, indicates what is elsewhere also stated, that in the end of this age judgment begins with the professed house of God (1 Pet. 4:17), and his great displeasure against those who make merchandise of the truth.

If the test of character approved of God, is love—– perfect love for God, for the brethren, yea, also for our enemies—–then let that thought be continually before all of our minds to the intent that we be not overtaken, that we be not deceived by the great Adversary, who still would fain put darkness for light and light for darkness, on this as upon every other subject. Our anticipation is that the great conflict which will ultimately reach the world, and eventuate in the anarchy which will overthrow all law and order, will begin with the Church; begin with the consecrated, the sanctified, the enlightened. Does not the Lord forewarn us, that in all things judgment must begin at the house of God. (I Pet. 4:17.) Necessarily it must begin with those who are highest up in that house as respects light, knowledge and privileges. R. 4583, R. 1795, R. 4208

4:18 Key Reference: ***If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner. Pro. 11:31***

The words of 1 Pet. 4:18 are solemn, from whatever standpoint they may be viewed. It is the same Apostle who urges the Church to pursue a course that would be pleasing to God and who assures us that "so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:11.) It is proper that we inquire why in these words an abundant salvation is suggested, while in our text it is declared that the righteous shall scarcely be saved.

We inquire first who are the righteous referred to in our text? We reply that the Apostle is not referring to any class of people, but merely in a general way referring to a principle of the Divine Law which declares that he that doeth these things shall live, and that any failure to do the perfect will of God would be sin, and that "the wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23.) In other words, the Apostle is speaking of God's arrangement. God has promised eternal life only to the righteous. God's Law makes no allowance for sin, but condemns it and declares that all unrighteousness is sin. —1 John 5:17.

This is the basis of the Apostle's statement that a righteous person could be no more than saved under the Divine Law. He could not say, as some teach, "Lord, I have done more than was required of me; I have been [SM305] more than righteous. On the score of my righteousness I could claim Thy promise of eternal life, but having been more than merely righteous I have a reserve of merit which I can apply for others." This, to some extent, is the theory of our Catholic friends. On the strength of this they pray to Mary, the Apostles and certain others of the saints whom they believe to have laid up for them a surplus of merit. The Apostle's words are in contradiction to this thought, assuring that no one could be more than righteous and that consequently God's offer of salvation to the righteous could not be more than made. The righteous would scarcely be saved; that is to say, would have nothing of left-over merit, nothing of surplus. It would require his every effort to comply with the standard of righteousness.

From this standpoint the Apostle's words are very clear, very meaningful, very reasonable; and we see at once the significance of the latter part of our text, "Where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" —What show would they have? In other words, his thought is that if the Divine Law has provided eternal life for only those who are absolutely perfect in God's sight, what chance, what show, would there be for any sinner condemned for

either many or few transgressions; and as for the ungodly---those failing to recognize their responsibility to the Almighty---where would they appear, what show would they have? The inferential answer is, None! God's Law would condemn them, sentence them.

But nothing in the Scriptures indicate that the Divine Law would sentence them to an eternity of torture. Rather the Divine Law is that "the wages of sin is death." "The soul that sinneth it shall die." (Ezek. 18:4.) Eternal life is the gift of God (Rom. 6:23), and will be given only to those who have His approval, only to the righteous. Who then are the righteous amongst men? The Scriptures answer, "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Rom. 3:10.) They again declare that our Lord Jesus was the only righteous One, and that He died, the Just for the unjust, for our reconciliation to the Father. Where is the hope under God's Law for either the best or the worst of our fallen race?

We answer, right there lies the key to the Gospel of Christ, which assures us that as we all inherit our imperfections from our parents and they from theirs, and thus originally all from Adam, so Christ Jesus, having given Himself as a Ransom or corresponding price for Father Adam, having laid down His life for Adam's sin, has a corresponding merit represented in the value of His death as a Sin-offering. This, from the Divine standpoint, is the full offset to Father Adam's transgression, and hence is not only sufficient in value to cancel his debt and condemnation but sufficient in value also to offset the influence of his sin and condemnation. Here behold the Wisdom, Love and Justice of God in combination! SM304

4:19 Another translation for this verse:

So if you are suffering in a manner that pleases God, keep on doing what is right, and trust your lives to the God who created you, for he will never fail you. (NLT)

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the **will of God** [for righteousness' sake] commit the keeping of their souls in well-doing unto him, as unto a faithful Creator. R. 1781

1 Peter Chapter 5

1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:

2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly,

3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock,

4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "GOD RESISTS THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

8 Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

11 To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

12 By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand.

13 She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you, and so does Mark my son.

14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus.

Amen.

5:1 **We recognize the reasonableness of the Scriptures declaring that all who attend to the spiritual ministries of the Truth are properly described by the term "Elder"; whether otherwise they are doing the service of an apostle or prophet or evangelist or pastor or teacher. To fill any of these positions of service properly one must be recognized as an Elder in the Church. Thus the apostles declared that they were elders (1 Pet. 5:1; 2 John 1); and when referring to the ministers (servants) of the Church and their selection, they are mentioned in our common version of the Bible under three names: bishops, elders and pastors.**

Where these speak, all of the body of Christ are to give attention to hear. Where these are silent, no one has authority to speak. And while an Elder should be chosen to the position of serving and feeding the flock because of special aptness to teach (to point out the instructions of our Lord and the apostles upon any subject), and while such an Elder should, therefore, in this way be specially helpful to the body of Christ in drawing the attention of all to the inspired authority of the Word, nevertheless any member of the body of Christ has the same privilege—not of exercising authority, but of calling the attention of his fellows to the Word of authority. The Apostle exhorts the Elders that so far from in any manner or degree exercising a lordly or authoritative position in the Church, they should rather be "ensamples to the flock." They should be examples in the matter of meekness, in the matter of patience, in the matter of brotherly kindness, in the matter of courtesy, so that the more any of the brethren would copy these Elders the more would the spirit of the Lord prevail in the flock, and the fruits and graces of the spirit be manifested. On the contrary, we know that if the Elder or leader of a little company of the Lord's people be self-assertive, dogmatic, imperious in manner, tone or look, the effect upon the company under his influence is to produce bickerings, rivalries, ambitions, strifes as to who is greatest, etc.

Manifestly, whoever occupies the position of an Elder amongst the Lord's people, however small the group may be, occupies a position fraught with responsibilities to the Lord and to the flock, as well as with besetments to himself. Great care should therefore be exercised by every company of the Lord's people, to so far as possible select for the position of leaders or Elders in the Church such persons as would not be likely to be injured by the privilege of service—such as occupying this post would indeed be ensamples of the flock in humility and in all of the graces of the Lord's spirit.
F244, R. 2654

5:2-3 It was undoubtedly in full accord with the Apostle Paul's advice that the Church had need to select as its servants men "apt at teaching," "able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers," and when necessary to "rebuke sharply that they may be sound in faith." They were to recognize under-shepherds, who would not "lord it over God's heritage," but would "**feed** the flock" with meat in due season—avoiding teachers having ears which itched for popularity and flattery. 1 Pet. 5:2-4; 1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:25; Titus 1:9,13

If one properly attends to the shepherding of the flock, he will not have time for other interests. Those who have been called to the position of Eldership amongst the Lord's people should consider this an honor and a privilege from the Lord; and they should be very careful to seek it, not for filthy lucre's sake, but with a ready mind. (1 Peter 5:1-4.)

But in seeking this position let each one remember that there is danger of the development of pride and the assumption of power.

Those who have the high privilege of serving as an Elder Brother should watch themselves to see that they do not lord it over God's heritage. They should remember that they are not the Chief Shepherd, but only under-shepherds. If any should lord it over the flock, he would bring injury to himself as well as to the Church; for in thus doing he would be cultivating a spirit of pride.

Peter was very explicit in this matter, when counseling the elders to "feed **the flock of God**" (He did not say your flock, your people, your church, as many ministers today speak, but **the flock of God.), not as lords** of the heritage, but being patterns to the flock —-patterns of humility, faithfulness, zeal and godliness. (1 Pet. 5:1-3.)
E284, R. 5185, R. 1523

5:4 The expression, "the crown of life," is another way of saying the reward of life; and this life is on the highest plane. The Apostle Paul speaks of this same crown as the "crown of righteousness." The Apostle Peter calls it the "crown of glory." It is the crown of righteousness because it is the reward that comes as the result of righteousness, of obedience to God and the principles of His Government, of faithfulness to our covenant. It is the crown of glory because it is the reward which brings glory, honor, immortality.
R. 5499

5:5-6 Key Reference: ***Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble. Pro. 3:34***

It may not be amiss that here we notice the fact that altho the word "Elder" has the significance of "older," yet amongst the Lord's brethren it is not merely years of natural life that is to be taken into consideration; in the Lord's family we sometimes see "babes" with gray hairs. Nor can we even count eldership according to the number of years that have elapsed since the begetting of the spirit, for some grow rapidly and mature quickly; others who receive the truth permit the "thorns" of cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches to choke the word, and hence never get beyond the position of "babes," – never bring forth the ripe fruits of the spirit.

Nor can we reckon this matter of relationship merely according to the degree of knowledge of the divine plan attained; for, as the Apostle assures us, it is possible for some to have much knowledge and yet be but "tinkling cymbals" according to the Lord's standpoint of estimation. While therefore an Elder, in order to be "apt to teach," must have attained to some considerable degree of knowledge of the divine plan, nevertheless the real evidence of his fitness for the service of an elder must not be determined by his knowledge merely, but additionally must be measured by his growth in grace. So then such of the brethren in any place as possess clear knowledge of the divine plan and are "apt to teach," and who additionally give unmistakable evidence that they have grown in grace and are bearing in daily life the fruits of the spirit of the Lord, in considerable measure of maturity, may be considered qualified to be elders; —-and such may properly be chosen to the eldership by their brethren, regardless of their age according to the flesh.

According to the flesh Peter and several others of the apostles of our Lord were his elders, but according to the spirit our Lord is the Elder Brother of all accepted to the family of God. According to the flesh both Timothy and Titus were young men—young in years—so that the Apostle needed to write to one of them, "Let no man despise thy youth." (1 Tim. 4:12.) And yet these young men the Apostle recognized as Elders in the Church, who, because of their spiritual development and knowledge of the divine plan, and aptness to teach, were well qualified to feed the flock of God and to be overseers in it—but not lords, not rulers, not masters, and not vested with any authority—merely privileged to call to the attention of the flock the voice of the great Shepherd and his twelve chosen assistants, and to lead them to the green pastures and still waters of divine truth.

It was after specially enjoining modesty and humility upon the ones most advanced and most capable of the flock that the Apostle, in the language of our text, urges that each one of the Lord's sheep, so far from seeking to be a leader in the sense of a ruler or lord or master, should seek to be subject one to another—to hear gladly from the humblest of the flock, and to be willing to yield his own preference, so far as his judgment and conscience would permit. A Church operating under this spirit would not be likely to be rent with contention, for each would be so anxious for the interests of the cause and so willing to condescend to the wishes of others, that even the will of the majority would not be considered satisfactory, but rather all would seek, if possible, to reach such a modified conclusion as would meet with nearly or quite unanimous approval.

The Apostle most distinctly points out that the quality essential to such proper conduct on the part of Elders and on the part of all, is humility. How beautiful is his exhortation, "Be clothed with humility." The thought would seem to be that outside of every other adornment of character, and covering all others, should be this robe of humble-mindedness, the opposite disposition to pride.

By way of clinching his argument, the Apostle reminds us of the principle upon which our Lord deals with his flock and with all; —that he disapproves of pride, and that all who are actuated by pride may be sure that the Lord, so far from receiving them, fellowshiping them, leading them, blessing them, will resist them, push them from him. The natural inference is that thus resisted of the Lord, the tendency of such as come under the influence of a spirit of pride and ambition will be not toward the truth nor toward any of the fruits and graces of the spirit, but further and further from these. "The Lord resisteth the proud, but supplies his favor to the humble." Come then, dear brethren, says the Apostle, let us cultivate this humility which the Lord so loves and appreciates and promises to reward. Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt us in due time. R. 2654

Key References: ***Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Matt. 23:12***

For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Luke 14:11

Only the humble-minded are prepared to learn the great lessons which must be learned before they will be ready for exaltation that would be profitable to themselves or to others. The course of selfishness and self-seeking is illustrated in Satan, who has failed and is ultimately to be destroyed. The same self-seeking spirit is styled the spirit of the world; and it is about to lead the world to the great catastrophe foretold in the Bible—from which, however, they will be rescued by Messiah and His Kingdom, and will have the opportunity of learning the great lesson of humility and obedience and of getting the reward.

Jesus, on the contrary, has illustrated to us the proper course which leads to glory, honor and immortality; namely, the course of full self-abasement and of full submission to whatever may be the Divine will. As the Savior has entered into His glory as a reward for His obedience, so the faithful of His people, the Church, demonstrating their humility and obedience, will be sharers, His joint-heirs in His future Kingdom of glory. R. 5847

5:7 The Lord himself is the Good Shepherd of his flock still, that he has not given over his care of it, nor his authority to anyone, to permit such to exercise lordship or to make laws of any kind for it, he having made all the laws and regulations necessary, and desiring that his sheep shall be free, with the liberty wherewith he made them free, in the fullest sense of the word.

The remedy for all such unauthorized over-carefulness for the interests of Zion is pointed out by the Apostle, saying, — "Casting all your care upon him [the Shepherd of the flock], for he careth for you [all]." Each sheep is to remember that the Shepherd's mighty hand (mighty power) is still in the midst of his people, and that because of his care we do not need to **overburden** ourselves with care, nor to feel that we must make **changes in his plans** and arrangements to meet what we might fancy to be new exigencies in the case. All such over-carefulness leads to fear, and fear indicates a lack of faith, a lack of confidence in the Shepherd; and is generally used by the great Adversary as one of his most powerful levers to lead the Lord's people into a wrong course.

Let us all, then (all of the advanced or elder class), have a care for the flock; yea, a deep solicitude; but let us cast the weight of this care upon the Lord, and let our faith trust him that he who has been working out so grand and glorious a plan as his Word reveals to us now, "the plan of the ages," has made full provision for every feature, every circumstance, every condition; and let us thus be ready to cooperate with him in harmony with his Word, but not to run where we are not sent, nor in any manner to take our Lord's place, nor attempt to do his work. But only the humble-minded are likely to receive any lasting blessing, present or future, at the hands of our Lord; for he resisteth the proud and showeth favor to the humble. R. 2655

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.
– 1 Peter 5:6-7 –

These comforting words of the Apostle Peter are addressed to the Church of Christ; and all who are of the Lord's people surely realize that there are cares and difficulties of life which are our portion and which are perplexing. These cares of life come also to those who are of the world—to some more and to some less. But they **surely** come to all who are the Lord's children.

The word **care** very often has in it the thought of **worry, trouble of mind**; and this is its use by the Apostle in this place. The Apostle Paul also says, "Be careful for nothing" —be worried about nothing, have anxiety about nothing. So we might render the words of St. Peter, "Casting all your **anxiety** upon Him; for He is taking thought for you."

Each day that a Christian lives he should be more reliant upon the Lord. He should realize more fully than before that our Heavenly Father, who has provided for the grass of the field and for the birds of the air, cares far more for His children than for the flowers or for many sparrows, and that He has a Plan also for the world —an arrangement for their blessing, in due time. But **we** have already entered into the blessing of the Lord; we have already become His children, and are His especial care. And "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" —those that reverence Him.

He will give what is best—what is for our good as New Creatures. We should not doubt, nor fear that He will not provide for our needs. He knows all about our affairs, and is not unmindful of our welfare. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."

How needful this humility before God, and how consoling and precious this loving assurance! As we go on in this blessed way marked out by our Lord, let us learn more and more fully that we are not to ask anything according to our wills, but only that His will may be done in us and for us. His Wisdom is unerring. Let us tell the Lord all about our burdens, great and small, and let us appropriate to ourselves His love and sympathy, applying to our hearts the balm of His Word, of the precious promises which are the heritage of His own, trusting Him that He is both able and willing to supply our every need—yea, that He delights thus to bless us, if we abide in His Love. R. 5508

Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. – 1 Peter 5:8 –

In the New Testament two Greek words are thus translated, **daimonion** and **diabolos**. Of these two words, the first should be properly rendered "demon"; and the second "devil." The **demons** are the unclean spirits, the familiar spirits, the fallen angels; while the **Devil** is Satan. The term Satan signifies **adversary**, opponent; for the Devil is the opponent of righteousness and of Jehovah.

Whoever has failed to discern that there is a Devil is all the more liable to come under the influence of this great, malevolent being, who is portrayed in the Scriptures as the greatest foe to God, to men and to righteousness. St. Paul speaks of the "wiles of the Devil" and warns the Church that her warfare is with "wicked spirits in the heavenlies." (Eph. 6:11,12, margin.) He also mentions "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2), and intimates that it would be impossible for us really to contend with him; for he is too wily, too wise for us.

There is an evil influence constantly exerted in the world, operating against truth, righteousness and purity, and therefore operating against God. The Scriptures inform us that this influence is exerted by the Devil, Satan, who was once a holy angel. It was by permitting pride and ambition to gain control of his heart, that Satan became an opponent of God and of righteousness. ––1 John 3:8; 1 Tim. 3:6; Isa. 14:12-14.

Although mankind cannot see Satan, yet he can see them, and by means of mental suggestion can gain control of them. He has a variety of ways by which he exercises his influence. The most potent way is through human agents–––using one person against another. His favorite method of operating is by putting darkness for light. This he does by making the **good** appear **evil**, the **true, false**, and the **right, wrong**.

St. Peter tells us in our text that Satan goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. The lion has a very stealthy walk. On his feet are soft cushions, which enable him to come very near to his prey before his approach is recognized. When we are off guard he springs upon us unawares, stirs up the evil of the old nature, and unless desperately resisted he will take full control and drive us on to ruin. Or he will endeavor at least to turn us off the track of the narrow way.

The Christian's warfare is a fight of faith. St. James' statement, "Resist the Devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7), does not mean that we are to battle with him in order to confound him. Whoever thinks that he is able to battle alone with Satan surely must possess great self-conceit, or else must overestimate his own ability and underestimate that of the Adversary. In any contention, Satan would surely gain the victory.

Malice, envy, hatred and strife, the Apostle says, are the kind of works which Satan supports and into which he endeavors to lead mankind. (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 John 3:8.) His methods are deceptive. His suggestions come along the line of pride and self-conceit. The mental suggestion, "You can do it; you are a person of great ability; do not be afraid; show people what is in you," has led to the downfall of many.

In order to deceive the children of light, Satan transforms himself into an angel [messenger] of light; for well he knows that he would not deceive them, if he were to present himself as a representative of sin. Ever since the fall of Adam, the Devil has sought to entrap mankind. Particularly for the past eighteen centuries, he has been endeavoring to introduce error into the Church, in order to produce false Christians---Christians who would be a detriment to the cause of Christ.

The Lord's people are to resist the Devil by not allowing his seductive arguments to have weight with us. We have the sure word of prophecy and the instructions of our Lord and of His Apostles; and if we love the Word of the Lord, we shall seek to be guided by it. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that Wicked One toucheth him not." —1 John 5:18.

Satan, our Adversary, strong and lion-like, vigilant and fully awake, seeks to use every opportunity against us, as the Apostle declares. He seeks to devour us, to swallow us up in calamity, patiently waiting and insidiously laying snares for the "new creatures," using his many blinded servants to brow-beat or cajole or otherwise inveigle us into yielding to the old will; —thus separating us from the Good Shepherd and making us more and more deaf to his Word. Since our Lord sees best to permit Satan to have this liberty, and will not take it from him until the beginning of the Millennial age, when he shall be bound, to deceive the nations no more, it implies that in some sense it is profitable to the Lord's people that this Adversary be granted liberty against them.

Editor's note:
A *roaring* lion is one that incites fear. We know that fear is another tool of Satan.

If the very elect will be in danger, what must we expect respecting the world of mankind in general, and nominal Christianity? We must expect, as the Scriptures forcefully picture it, that many will "fall from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." We must expect the number thus to fall from the faith to be large, as again it is prophetically stated, "A thousand shall fall at thy side; ten thousand at thy right hand—but it shall not come nigh thee,...because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation." —1 Tim. 4:1; Psa. 91:7-9.

Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.
1 Peter 5:9

We know that we have no power with which to oppose Satan. None is sufficient for these things except the Lord. But He is greater than are Satan and all his angels. We are looking forward with the eye of faith to the things that are unseen. So it behooves us to be steadfast, immovable, full of faith, and therefore able to meet whatever the Father permits to come upon us. R. 5183, R. 1053, R. 2769, CR455, R. 2172

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. Neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.
John 10:27-29

Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.
1 Peter 5:9

Be Steadfast

Be steadfast, brothers, in this evil day,
Let not your footsteps falter in the way,
However dark the storm-clouds may appear,
Our Master bids us neither doubt nor fear;
His arm protects us and His hand will guide
Though dangers compass us on every side,
Though rough and perilous the way may be,
His voice is ever calling, "Follow Me!"

Be steadfast, though the world with bitter scorn
May strive to pierce your brow with cruel thorn;
It heaped upon Him ignominy, shame--
Shall not His followers endure the same?
Feel it a privilege to bear the cross,
Though it may mean both agony and loss?
He bore so much for us, and shall not we
Count it a joy to fellow-sufferers be?

Be steadfast, though at times your hearts may fail,
As sorrows multiply and cares assail;
When friends forsake and lov'd ones pass away.
And earthly hopes and pleasures all decay;
Think of the "Man of Sorrows," keep in view
That Holy One who suffered so for you,
And let your courage and endurance prove
The depth of your fidelity and love.

--W. H. Pepworth

5:10-11 The construction of the sentence, we think, would naturally lead us to suppose that God would stablish, strengthen, settle his children after they were perfected through suffering. This suffering awhile takes in all of our Christian experiences. It does not mean that we suffer awhile and that then we get to a place where we suffer nothing. The very noblest of Christians have suffered more as they progressed. Thus it was with our Lord. He suffered most of all at the end of his career. So on the whole we are perfected by means of this suffering, as we reach the mark of perfect love in this present life and continue to progress. We think that the suffering takes in all of the present life's experiences. So the thought is, apparently, After ye have suffered awhile (and thus been made perfect), he will "strengthen, stablish, settle you." We all agree that we will not be actually perfect until we attain the resurrection change.

Those who are to be associated with the Redeemer and ultimately to be exalted to the Divine nature and glory, it is necessary that they make special manifestations of loyalty, of self-abasement and of self-sacrifice. What was true of Christ is also true of the Church, which is His Body, and which He purchased with His own precious blood. (Col. 1:24; Acts 20:28.) We are called to follow in His footsteps; hence every son whom the Father receives is chastised. —Heb. 12:6,7.

Let us be thankful that we are of those who appreciate the privilege of being trained in the School of Christ – of suffering with Him now and of reigning with Him by and by. In this school we are learning valuable lessons of experience. Here we receive chastisements, many of which are not punishments for sins, but preparation for the work of the next Age. Let us remember that unless we are willing to learn these lessons and to endure hardness, we shall not be prepared to enter into the eternal glory.
—2 Tim. 2:3; I Pet. 5:10. R. 4750, R. 5147

5:12-14 Before leaving this many-sided subject of order in the Church, we would also briefly call attention to the Lord's design that the whole (living) Church, however widely scattered over the world, should be knit together as one. It was so in the Apostle's days, and it should be so still. It is a pleasant observation that, even with their limited means of communication, whenever there was opportunity the churches in one place were prompt to send Christian greetings and benedictions to those in other places (Acts 15:23; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Cor. 13:13; Phil. 4:21-23; Col. 4:14,15; 1 Pet. 5:13; Titus 3:15; 3 John 14); and all were subject to the same regulations instituted by the apostles, having the "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism." Their earnest endeavor was to keep "the unity of the faith in the bonds of peace," and to avoid any schism in the body of Christ. —Eph. 4:3-13; 1 Cor. 12:25.

It is noticeable, too, what a beautiful unity of spirit and of faith, and what steady cooperation, there was among the apostles and elders of the early Church. They were all zealously endeavoring to preach "the same things," the "sound doctrine," of the truth of which they were fully persuaded. R. 1895

Second Epistle of St. Peter



7

There is a touching tenderness

in the epistles of the aged Apostle Peter to the household of faith, showing that, while he realized that the time of his departure was drawing nigh (2 Pet. 1:14; John 21:18,19), his solicitude for the growth and development of the Church was increasing. Accordingly, he writes two general epistles, not so much to advance new truth, as to call to remembrance truths already learned and fully received (2 Pet. 1:12-15), and to counsel all to faithfulness and to growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In his Second Epistle the Apostle is urging upon the whole Church the importance of developing the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Then he reminds them of the vision of the coming Kingdom which he himself and St. James and St. John saw in the holy mount. He points out the need that careful attention be given to the study of prophecy. He warns them of the false teachers who will be manifested among them. He reminds them of the condemnation and overthrow that came to the angels who turned from obedience to God, of the catastrophe that befell Sodom and Gomorrah because of their corruption, of the destruction of the ungodly in the great Deluge, of the perverse and wicked course of Balaam the prophet, and its consequences. Then he charges that some of them were following his course, and next he discusses the fact that things will not always continue as they have been; that evil shall not always triumph; but that a great change impends, which will be the introduction of a new feature of the Divine Plan; namely, the establishment of God's Kingdom upon earth.

St. Peter indicates that this great change will come very suddenly—a radical change such as came in the days of Noah, a very sudden catastrophe, the coming of which will be scoffed at by those having a form of godliness without its power. (2 Peter 3:3,4.) This catastrophe he pictures as a great conflagration. The "heavens" will take fire and be consumed. Then the "earth" will take fire and be burned up. The "elements" will all dissolve with the fervency of the heat.

We are to remember that the Second Coming of our Lord is to bring a time of refreshing and of restitution to all mankind (Acts 3:19-21); and we must interpret these symbols denoting trouble in harmony with this Scriptural declaration. The word "heavens" is a figurative term for the present religious institutions—ecclesiasticism. The fire will extend to the social structure, the social order of things. The social, political, financial and ecclesiastical systems together make up our present order. The ecclesiastical systems will, we believe, go into destruction first, according to the Bible. The fire will next affect the social and industrial organization—merchandise, capital and labor, society, etc. It will devour the capitalistic elements, the banking elements, the political elements, the religious elements, the industrial elements. All these will be "melted," "dissolved" —they will separate, part company, fail to keep together, and will be swept away.

If this great cataclysm of trouble were all we had to which to look forward, we would think it the course of wisdom to say nothing about it. We would say, Do not think about it or speak of it; for it will be bad enough when it comes. But when the Bible tells us that the great trouble is designed merely to sweep away these outgrown religious systems, social systems, political systems, etc., and that God will on the wreck of all these things establish the Kingdom of Messiah for the world's blessing, then we are glad of the trouble, and see that it is the necessary thing. This knowledge would be a great comfort and relief of mind to many bewildered ones who see the trouble coming on with increasing momentum, yet who cannot see the ultimate good to result, who feel that revolution and anarchy are confronting the entire world, but see not the golden lining to the black clouds of trouble.

Peter would have us know that, if faithful, we are to be made even "partakers of the divine nature," and that we are to be joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, of all things. —2 Pet. 1:4. As the spirit of God draws our hearts into closer fellowship and sympathy with the divine mind, the value of these "exceeding great and precious promises" is more and more fully realized, until there glows in our hearts the same holy enthusiasm that so filled the hearts of the apostles.

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble, for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
2 Peter 1:10-11

The Apostle's words near the close of his Epistle, should be of special comfort and cheer to us now, in this brief waiting time since the close of Gentile Times. He says,

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation. (2 Peter 3:15)

How glad of this little extended time some of the Lord's dear ones are, who have come into the knowledge of Present Truth and consecrated themselves to God since October 1914! And how glad are many of Christ's followers who have longer known of these precious truths, that the Lord has mercifully granted them a little further time to make their calling and election sure! Perhaps some of these were not ready when the Gentile Times closed.

"Wherefore, brethren, seeing that ye look for these things [the overthrow of the existing order and the establishment of the glorious Kingdom of God's dear Son], **be diligent** that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless"; for our Lord "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy....Amen." —2 Peter 3:14; Jude 24,25.
R. 3215, R. 5863, R. 3149



2 Peter Chapter 1

1 Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,

6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,

7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble,

11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

12 For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.

13 Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you,

14 knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.

15 Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,

20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

1:1 The first question coming to us in connection with these words of exhortation is, To whom were they addressed? Are these the instructions given to sinners? Is this the way by which sinners are to approach to God? No. These instructions are addressed to those who are already justified through faith in the precious blood of Christ. They are addressed—– "To them who have obtained like precious faith with us [the apostles] through the righteousness of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

The Apostle points out the proper course by which the believer, having made a proper start, shall continue onward and upward in his Christian development—–multiplying his grace and his peace. It is all-important, however, that he begin right, that he be truly begotten "by the word of truth," "the faith once delivered unto the saints" —–which the Apostle here terms "**precious** faith." This is not the faith promulgated by the higher critics. Their faith is far from precious. Their faith denies the fall, denies the ransom and all necessity for it, and consequently denies the resurrection based upon that ransom. Their faith consists in believing in their own judgments as the criterions of what is truth and what is error, and in doubting the testimony of Moses and the prophets, of the Lord and the apostles. Such a faith is not the "**precious** faith," is not "the faith once delivered unto the saints." And those who are building upon such a faith are not of those here addressed by the Apostle, and we need not expect that either their grace or their peace will be multiplied. R. 2136

1:2 The Apostle Peter sends greeting, saying, Grace and peace be **multiplied** unto you. If our hearts leaped for joy when we realized the first droppings of grace and peace, how should our songs abound now, with the increasing evidences of divine favor—–with the multiplication of grace and peace now experienced. But is it really so with us? are grace and peace really multiplied to us? The Apostle indicates that such should be the experience of all who have obtained like precious faith with him (verse 1); and, further, that this increase of blessing should come through an increasing knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. —–verse 2.

The true foundation, upon which we should build, is, —–**faith** in the righteousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, —–**faith** that his sacrifice for sin was once for all a full and complete ransom-price for Adam and all his posterity, so that all of these, as in due time they shall be brought to a knowledge of Christ, may, if they will, obtain cleansing and eternal life under the gracious terms of the New Covenant. It is those who build upon this **foundation** that may hope to multiply their grace and peace. How?

The Apostle answers—– "Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." At first it may occur to some that this has but a slight meaning, and that it simply signifies that we come to know that there is a God, and that there is a Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. But the knowledge of God means far more than this to the advancing and developing Christian: to him it means an intimate acquaintance with the Father and with the Son, a knowledge of the "mind of Christ," which is a full and clear representation to us of the mind of the Father. We are to grow in this knowledge by studying the Word of God, by discerning through that Word the principles which govern the divine conduct, as to how divine justice, wisdom, love and power operate. These are progressive studies. Something may be learned the first day of our Christian experience, but the end of the first year should show considerable progress in the knowledge of the divine mind; the

second year should show us a still further increase, and so on.

Let us remember that the strength sufficient which God has promised us, and by use of which we can be "overcomers," is provided in his Word. It is a strength derived from a **knowledge** of his character and plans, and of the conditions upon which we may share in them. Thus Peter expresses it, saying, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you **through the knowledge** of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, **through the knowledge** of him who hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that BY THESE ye might be partakers of the divine nature." 2 Pet. 1:2-4 R. 1531, R. 2137, A346

1:3 The Apostle, continuing, assures us that through this knowledge of God is imparted to us as by divine power "**all things that pertain unto life and godliness**." What an assurance! This statement of the importance of knowledge for our Christian development in every direction reminds us of the words of our Lord, "This is life eternal; that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.) To **know God**, as the Apostle here explains, signifies an **intimate acquaintance** with "him that hath called us by his own glory and virtue." It is only as we realize something of the greatness and perfection of the divine character that we are properly able to estimate our own littleness and imperfection; only as we see the beauties of his gracious character can we become intimately acquainted with God, familiar with his graces and virtues. The influence of this knowledge and fellowship with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, reacts upon our own hearts, and has a cleansing and sanctifying effect.

What then is God seeking? To what has He called us? The Apostle Peter says that God has "called us to glory and virtue." R. 2137, R. 5081

1:4 Only those who are following in the pathway which the Apostle here marks out; who multiply their grace and peace, through an ever-increasing, intimate knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, —those who are seeing more and more clearly the divine character and plan, and whose hearts are in a susceptible and impressionable attitude, and upon which is being fixed more and more distinctly the image of God's dear Son, who is the express image of the Father. (Rom. 8:29.) Before these, shining out as helps by the way, in letters of light, are the "exceeding great and precious promises" of God's Word, which to other hearts are unilluminated, dark and almost meaningless.

Which and what are these promises?

Oh, they are so many and so precious that it is difficult to know which would rank first. Perhaps first of all is the precious promise, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Another is, "If I go away, I will come again, and receive you unto myself;" in harmony with which is the prayer, "Father, I will that these may be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory." Another is, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Another is, "They shall be mine...in that day when I make up my jewels." Another is,

"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and and eternal weight of glory." Another is, that we are "Heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, our Lord, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Another is, that we are "Begotten again to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." Another is, "To him that overcometh I will give power over the nations" —-authority, dominion as "kings and priests unto God" to "reign on the earth." Another is that these kings and priests will reign to bless, as it is written, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Another promise is that Israel according to the flesh shall yet obtain mercy and blessing through the mercy of these kings and priests of the Gospel age. —-Rom. 11:32.

Finally, all of these exceeding great and precious promises are summed up by the Apostle in his declaration that, through this knowledge of God and through the influence of these precious promises, it is God's will that we who by nature were children of wrath even as others "might become partakers of the divine nature." Oh, what a rich promise is here! How exceedingly great and precious!

Thus it is our privilege to know God; but only those who have had the blessed experience can appreciate how greatly the grace and peace of God can be **multiplied** to us through the **knowledge** of him thus acquired. As we draw near to him in prayer and communion and the study of his precious Word, we are made to understand the wealth of the divine love and favor toward us who are in Christ Jesus, and who, through entire consecration of ourselves to God, have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust [the worldly desires and ambitions]. We learn that to us are given exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be made partakers of the divine nature; that we are called to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ; that, if we are faithful to our covenant of entire consecration to God, we shall be made like him and see him as he is; that we may behold the King in his beauty; and that through us in the ages to come God will manifest the exceeding riches of his grace. Oh, what heights of glory are we called to share with our beloved Lord; and what fathomless love is manifested toward us in Christ Jesus!

In humble thankfulness let us ponder these precious promises more and more as in secret we bow at the throne of the heavenly grace; and here let the holy spirit of God apply the instruction to our hearts, and so may we be filled with the spirit, and **grace and peace be multiplied unto us**. R. 2137, R. 1532

1:5-7 The Apostle Peter tells us how to proceed in the matter of cultivating Christian character, intimating that we cannot do it all in a day, nor in a few days, but that it must be a gradual, daily life-work, a process of addition—-adding virtue to virtue and grace to grace, day by day and hour by hour. He says, "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue [fortitude]; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance [self-control]; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity [love]." Then he adds, "If ye do these things ye shall never fall." —-2 Pet. 1:5-7,10.

By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.
– 2 Peter 1:4 –

The promises of God made to this class are exceeding great and precious, and if they are really believed they cannot fail to powerfully influence the life.

We who have been blessed with the richest favors of divine grace in that knowledge of divine truth which reveals to us the high privilege of becoming sons and heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for the called and chosen and faithful according to his purpose, have a never failing cause for deepest gratitude. Great indeed was the favor which revealed to us the hope of everlasting life as justified, human sons of God—of full restitution to the divine favor and likeness, as at first possessed by our father Adam. And great was our joy when first, by faith, we appropriated this precious promise and realized that legally, through merit of the precious blood of Christ shed for our redemption, we had passed from death unto life, and that in God's appointed time the everlasting treasure with all its attendant glory and blessing would be ours. But beyond even this favor are the **"exceeding great and precious promises"** to those of this justified class who have been called, according to God's purpose, to become the bride and joint-heir of his dear Son.

Although angelic nature is higher than human nature, our God has not been content with offering to the "elect" Church angelic nature, but in the riches of his grace and wonderful provision he has far outdone the highest flight of human fancy and has promised that the overcoming Church, the "little flock," to whom it is his good pleasure to give the Kingdom, the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall be exalted to share the divine glory and divine nature of her Lord, as well as to share his heavenly Kingdom.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for us: we cannot comprehend why our great Creator should exalt to his own nature such poor, helpless creatures of the dust as we by nature are. But this and all the other gracious promises exhibit to us more and more the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths, of the love of our God, which surpasses human knowledge.
R. 1281, R. 1879, R. 2138

This is a very strong assurance—that if we do these things we are **sure to stand approved of God**. We do well, therefore, to consider them with **special care**. Here are eight elements which must go toward making up the Christian character, the one to be added to the other and assimilated by the spiritual germ of the new nature, until the embryo New Creature is formed; and then it must continue to grow and develop. Look at them again. They are:

1. **FAITH – The Foundation** (see vs. 1-2)

Let us consider these **additions** to our faith, which, if possessed and continuously cultivated, are the assurance that we shall never fall, and that an abundant entrance into the Kingdom shall be granted to us:

2. **Virtue [fortitude]** — strength of character in righteousness.
3. **Knowledge** — knowledge of God and of his righteous will concerning us (revealed through his Word, by the holy spirit).
4. **Temperance [self-control]** — moderation in earthly things, in judgment, in conduct, in the regulation of temporal affairs.
5. **Patience** — the waiting for the Lord's time and way and the indications of his will.
6. **Godliness** — godlikeness, piety, — devout, controlling reverence for God
7. **Brotherly kindness** — a broadenimg and deepening of our sentiments and an enlarging of our hearts toward "the brethren."
8. **Charity [love]** — the bond of perfectness which unites all the other graces, and as a name stands for them all. Love to God alone is not the full manifestation of this grace; nor can there be, according to the teachings of God's Word, a sincere love for God, without a corresponding love to man: "If a man say, I love God," says the Apostle John, "and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20.) And Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." —John 13:35. R. 4808, R. 2155 • *See also the Appendix-2*

1:8 Just as in a well-kept orchard pruning, trimming and cultivation are necessary to accomplish the desired end of fruitfulness, so must we be watchful and take necessary precautions to prevent blight and decay of character, and to guard against the intrusion of evil powers and influences calculated to sap the life of the New Creature. By resisting the Devil he will flee from us; and by patient continuance in well-doing an increasing measure of development will result. "If these things be in you and abound," says the Apostle Peter (that is, if you have them in some measure and keep on cultivating them, so that they abound more and more and rule in you), "they make you that ye shall be neither barren [idle] nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." R. 4809

1:9 God has given us an understanding of what is pleasing and acceptable to Him and what is displeasing to Him in our characters. He tells that He is pleased that we should have a large measure of His Holy Spirit. We are to manifest the meekness, the gentleness of Christ. The Apostle says that we are to abound in patience, in self-control, in long-suffering, in brotherly kindness, in love. If these fruits be in us, and then if they reach the abounding condition or degree, we shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the

knowledge of the Lord; and so an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior. But he who does not appreciate the necessity of this is blind, as the Apostle says; he cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins (2 Pet. 1:7-9).

If a spirit-begotten New Creature fails to see the privilege of cultivating the Master's spirit–the spirit of holiness–it is because he is not making progress. He is like a new-born child that has not learned to focus its eyes. You know a kitten does not get its eyes open until the ninth day, and then it comes gradually to properly use its eyes. So with us as New Creatures at the beginning of our experience: we do not know at first how to focus our spiritual eyesight. But, surely, as we grow more and more toward maturity we must come to have the proper focus on all the affairs of life. We must see "what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2). Q52

1:10 "Wherefore, brethren, **give diligence** to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things [if you diligently cultivate this disposition] ye shall **never fall**." Being justified fully, by faith in the sacrifice of Christ for your redemption and sanctification (setting apart from the world and devotion to the service of God) by the Truth, your final selection to that position of glory, honor and immortality, to which you are called, shall be **sure**. For "so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

While the Apostle Peter, addressing the consecrated, thus clearly and explicitly points out the way in which we may make our calling and election sure to the chief favor of God, the Apostle Paul, addressing the same class, shows that willful and continual neglect to develop and cultivate the Christian character, involves the loss, not only of the chief favor of the High Calling, but, eventually, of all favor. He wrote, "If ye [ye who have solemnly covenanted to sacrifice your **very life** in the service of God, for the eradication of evil] live after the flesh [with selfish effort, merely to gratify self] ye shall die." (Rom. 8:13.) God has no use or place for willful covenant-breakers and covenant-despisers, after they have been brought to a knowledge of the Truth and of his will, and have covenanted to do it faithfully.

How highly we, who belong to the Gospel Dispensation, should value its privileges and opportunities, seeking to "make our calling and election sure!" If those who were called with an earthly calling, to be a "house of servants," rendered but a reasonable service when they engaged in the Lord's work zealously, as did John the Baptist, and were faithful, how much more zeal and energy ought we to put forth—we who have been favored so much more highly?

Let us remember that this "high calling," this "heavenly calling," to joint-heirship with our Lord in the Kingdom, is a very special and a very limited call, that it will soon end, and that so far as the Divine revelation shows, it will never be repeated. R. 4809, R. 4979

1:11 The Apostle has been urging the development of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the heart, and so far as possible in the life—in the words, the deeds, the thoughts. He sums up his argument by saying that those who, following his advice in this matter, add one

after another of these qualities and so build up their Christian character, will "**never fall**." The implication is that there would be some tendency to fall, some testings; and that this development of character would be necessary in order that the individual might be able to stand these tests. So the Apostle's assurance is that those who do not fall, who stand all the tests, will be granted an **abundan**t entrance "into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" —the very thing that all of the Lord's people are invited to share.

The Christian who would expect to receive the reward of the Master's "Well done; enter into the joy of thy Lord!" must be very diligent in the sowing of the proper seeds in the garden of his heart. Acts, words and thoughts are the good seeds; and they must be sown carefully and persistently. They will yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness— meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly-kindness, love. And these fruits and flowers of the Holy Spirit abounding in the garden of the heart, St. Peter tells us, will make such a Christian ready for an abundant entrance "into the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." R. 5677, R. 5899

1:12 What **things** are here referred to?
Assuredly the necessity of giving all diligence to add to our faith virtue [fortitude]; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance [self-control]; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity [love]:... For if ye do these things ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. —Verses 5-11.

To be established in the truth signifies that we have carefully studied and thoroughly proved it by "the law and the testimony" (Isa. 8:20), and that as a consequence we are convinced of its verity, so that our faith is steadfast and immovable: we know whom we have believed; we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good; we have partaken of the sweets of fellowship with him; we have partaken of his spirit of meekness, faith and godliness to such an extent as to be led into a joyful realization of the fulness of his grace as manifested in the wonderful divine plan of the ages; and we have been permitted to see, not only the various features of that plan, but also the necessity and reasonableness of all its various measures in order to the full accomplishment of its glorious outcome in the fulness of the appointed times. This is what it is to be "established in the present truth." It is indeed a most blessed condition, bringing with it such peace and joy as the world can neither give nor take away.

But though we be thus established in the present truth, we need to bear in mind that our election to the high position to which we are called is not yet **made sure**. The race for the prize of our high calling is still before us, and we are yet in the enemy's country, surrounded by many subtle and powerful foes, so that if we would be successful we must "fight the good fight of faith," remembering, too, that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but [God's Truth is] mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds" of error and superstition and of inbred sin; and remembering, also, that "we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." —2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:12.

It is in view of these facts – of the warfare before us, of the subtlety of our temptations and of the weakness of the flesh—that the faithful Apostle Peter urges all diligence in the cultivation of the Christian graces and a continual calling to remembrance of the precious truths we have learned, that we may be strengthened thereby to make our calling and election sure.

Peter indeed describes a most amiable character, but who can consider it without feeling that to attain it will be a life-work. It cannot be accomplished in a day, nor a year, but the whole life must be devoted to it; and day by day, if we are faithful, we should realize a measure of growth in grace and of development of Christian character. It is not proper that we know the truth, and are contented to hold it in unrighteousness. We must see to it that the truth is having its legitimate and designed effect upon the character. And if the truth is thus received into good and **honest** hearts, we have the assurance of the Apostle that we shall never fall, and that in due time we shall be received into the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Hence we see the necessity of ever keeping the instructions and precepts of the Lord fresh in our minds, and of drinking deep into its inspiring spirit, although we are already established in the faith. To be established in the faith is one thing, but to be established in Christian character and in all the graces of the spirit is quite another. R. 3089

1:13-14 While he realized that the time of his departure was drawing nigh (2 Pet. 1:14; John 21:18,19), his solicitude for the growth and development of the Church was increasing.

As did Jesus so must we all, fully lose humanity, putting off this "tabernacle even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed." (2 Pet. 1:14.) This tabernacle—the flesh. It was consecrated to death and must fully die, but we, the **new creatures** who inhabit these bodies, do not die and will not need even to **sleep**, but instantly we shall become more alive than ever; or as Paul says, have "mortality **swallowed up** of life." R. 3215, R. 344

Key Reference: ***Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish. John 21:18***

Our Lord addressing the Apostle Peter, made a prophecy respecting him that he would live to be an old man, and that then he would be deprived of his liberties. This was not a very bright prospect to hold out before Peter; it meant a further testing of his loyalty. We are glad to know that the Apostle was not discouraged, and that he was faithful even unto death. The prophecy proved to Peter and to the other apostles present, that in the work in which they were to engage afresh they were not to expect Kingdom honors and blessings, but rather to remember the Lord's previous declaration that the servant is not above his Master, and that as men despitefully used the Master the servants must expect nothing better. How nobly those chosen ones came up to the various tests and requirements placed upon them! R. 4184

1:15 the Apostle Peter distinctly says that he wrote his epistles to the intent that his testimony might be with the Church after his decease—a clear evidence that he did not expect to live until the establishment of the Kingdom.

We are not to understand that the Apostles expected Christ's Kingdom in their day, before their death. St. Peter, without attempting to tell of the times and seasons, declared that he put his message into writing and committed it to holy men for the benefit of the Church after his death. F225, R. 5829

1:16-18 The lesson of a tableau illustration deeply impressed the three Apostles who witnessed the vision, namely, Peter, James and John. St. Peter referred to it afterward in his Epistle (2 Pet. 1:16-19).

Key References: ***And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power." Mark 9:1***

Also Matt. 16:28 and Luke 9:27

Jesus prepared His disciples for the transfiguration vision, saying, "There be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death until they see God's Royal Majesty having come with power." The occasion will be remembered. Jesus had foretold His death, quite contrary to the previous expectations of the Apostles, and now He sought to draw their minds gradually to a realization that His death would not mean a repudiation of the promise of the Kingdom and its glory but a fulfilment of their expectations on a higher plane. Jesus would formally offer Himself to Israel as King riding upon the ass five days before His crucifixion; He would be despised and rejected and crucified; but His kingly office and work would thereby only be confirmed. His authority to be King of the earth, His authority to release mankind from the power of sin and death, His authority to uplift humanity and to bring the earth in general to Paradise conditions, would all be founded upon His sacrificial death at Calvary.

All this was presented to the three chosen disciples six days later. Jesus took them to the mountain-top and was transfigured before them. His flesh and His garments shone and glistened white, after the manner of angels, the vision thus representing the Lord after having experienced His resurrection change from earthly to heavenly conditions. Then with Him "talked two men," says St. Luke, "who appeared in glory" —radiant, but less so than Jesus. In some manner they recognized these two men of the vision as Moses and Elijah.

How long the vision lasted we are not told, but St. Peter, thinking that he should make some comment on the situation, and not knowing what to say, suggested the building of three tabernacles, one for Jesus, one for Moses, one for Elijah. He evidently thought that the Master would be rejoiced at such blessed fellowship, and he was willing to do anything for His aid.

Then came a voice from the overshadowing cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him!" And suddenly the vision vanished, and they saw only Jesus with them, and He

no longer with radiant appearance. What could it all mean?

We have St. Peter's words (2 Pet. 1:16) that what they saw on the mountain represented the Royal Majesty of Messiah---the Kingdom of Messiah. Moses represented the faithful of Natural Israel, the "House of Servants"; "Moses as a servant, was faithful over all his House." Elijah represented The Christ in the flesh, the House of Sons, which has been in process of development throughout this Gospel Age. All of the consecrated, spirit-begotten people of God, during this Age, are represented by Elijah, who, God promised, should come before Messiah would set up His Kingdom. In other words, the Elijah class is composed of Jesus and all of His footstep followers throughout this Gospel Age---in their earthly or fleshly condition, spirit-begotten, but not yet spirit-born.

St. Peter's words fully satisfy us that the transfiguration scene was a vision of the coming glory of Christ--- "We were eye-witnesses of His Majesty, that the promised Kingdom will eventually come. The vision on the mount confirms this to us. However, the prophecies of old, which foretold Messiah's coming and reign, are still more authentic, "more sure," they cannot fail; the Kingdom merely awaits the sufferings of those who will be the members of the Body of Christ. Then, at the Second Coming of Jesus, these will be blessed and glorified, and the class represented by Moses will also be blessed and used as instruments of the Kingdom. Thus in the vision the entire Kingdom was represented: first of all, by Jesus Himself, second by Elijah, who represented the Church class, and third by Moses, who represented the faithful on the earthly plane, through whom the Heavenly blessings will pour out upon humanity. R. 5121 • *See also p. 45*

1:19 The Apostle proceeds to tell us that this vision, helpful as it was at the time, became secondary as he came to a better understanding of the prophecy which more particularly describes our Lord's second coming and Kingdom.

The Holy Spirit is the light of the **Church**, by which we are being specially guided into the Truth. St. Peter tells us that we have a more sure Word of prophecy, whereunto we do well that we take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. (2 Peter 1:19.) The light on the path of the just "shineth more and more unto the perfect Day." We are still in the dark place, and shall be until the darkness gives way and the Day is here. And so, as St. Peter says, we have need of this Word of prophecy "until the Day dawn." Thus we find that one Scripture helps to elucidate another.

While the revealment of our Lord's presence thus illuminates the hearts of his faithful ones as the Day-star and causes them to understand, and not be in darkness with the world in respect to his plans, present and future, the bright-shining of the Lord's presence shall affect nominal Christians, and the civilized world in general, also, but in a totally different manner; for the character of Christ's "harvest" work, during this period of his presence, is such as to cause a general opening of eyes along the lines of justice and injustice, righteousness and sin, the rights of mankind and the wrongs of mankind.

The bright-shining of the **present** One is causing great joy to the hearts of the faithful, who wait patiently for him and for the deliverance which he has promised; but the bright-shining, as it affects the worldly, has the effect of quickening their selfish propensities, producing discontent. R. 4649, R. 5339, R. 2979

A Word on Prophecy

Many prophecies are highly figurative, symbolical. Doubtless they had some measure of application to the circumstances and conditions of the people of Israel at the time they were written, but we have apostolic authority for concluding that their principal lessons were intended for Spiritual Israel. Saint Peter declares that "holy men of old spoke and wrote as they were moved by the holy Spirit," and that "not unto themselves but unto **us** they did minister the things which are now reported unto you." (2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Pet. 1:12) Our Lord and the apostles in their teachings quoted continually from the prophecies and invariably applied the lesson to their day or to some future event of this Gospel Age.

There are two general views respecting this and all prophecies; one of these, the one favored by the "higher critics," is that the prophets of the Old Testament Scriptures were men of high moral attainment and faith in God's promises, who realized in advance of others and more keenly the true situation of things, and of their own volition, prompted by their own faith and zeal, exhorted the people, in parables that would be helpful, instructive, encouraging, etc. The other view is that God had the faith in his own promises and arrangements, and that he miraculously operated upon certain chosen persons, so that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the holy spirit" —things which were not their own thoughts, but which encouraged themselves and inspired their own faith and zeal, as well as the faith and zeal of all about them. This view of the prophets and their prophecies gives the glory to God, and makes of the words of the prophets messages from God, and hence authoritative and reliable, while the fervent utterances of the very best men could not be considered reliable; but, as we all know, are frequently faulty, because of the fallibility of their authors. The Apostle Peter asserts this last view of the matter, and contradicts the former one.

Any other view than the latter would make the prophecies valueless as prophecies to the Church of today. It is not until we realize that the prophecies, although having some force and application to the times in which they were written, have a special force and application to us, as the antitypical Israel, and to the building of the antitypical Temple, that we get the true force, value and beauty of these prophecies —a force and meaning that is entirely lost to those who take the higher criticism view, and reduce the prophets of olden times to the level of street-corner preachers, who expressed truth in crude forms and figures, blended with considerable of untruth and human misjudgment.

No one can rightly appreciate the hopes and ambitions aroused in the minds of the Jewish nation by the Lord through the holy prophets, except as he realizes the fact that Spiritual Israel has taken the place in large measure of natural Israel, whose branches were broken off, that we who were of the Gentiles might be grafted in and become heirs of the chiefest, the heavenly, the spiritual features of those promises. —Rom. 11:26-33 HG409, R. 2521

1:20-21 The Apostle Peter's statement (2 Pet. 1:21) is that "prophecy came not in old time by the will of man [that they were not the imaginings of longing human hearts], but that holy men of old spoke as they were moved [to speak] by the holy spirit" of God. And so far from their utterances being their own ideas of what would come to pass, the Lord sends us word, through the Apostle Peter (1 Pet. 1:10,11), that the prophets did not know, but searched diligently to know what and what manner of time (whether literal or symbolic) the spirit which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand concerning the sufferings of Christ and concerning the glory and restitution of all things (Acts 3:21) that would follow as a result of his suffering—the just for the unjust. And not only does the Apostle tell us of this, but the prophets themselves acknowledge their own ignorance (Dan. 8:26,27; 12:4,8,9; Ezek. 20:49); and the Apostle exclaims that they spoke and wrote not for themselves and the people then living, but for the instruction of the Gospel Church, and especially for the two ends, the opening and the closing of the Gospel age. —1 Pet. 1:12; 1 Cor. 10:11.

The Apostle Peter assures us that the ancient worthies, although highly honored of God, and moved upon by his holy Spirit, spoke and wrote things which they did not understand. God used them as his servants to write out things not due to be understood by them, but which in due time would be revealed to us, the house of sons, by the operation of the same holy Spirit or holy power of God upon those begotten of his Spirit. In the past the Spirit's operation was chiefly mechanical: to us its operation is chiefly explanatory and sympathetic, expounding the divine plan through apostles and teachers specially "set in the Church" from time to time, the object being to enable the sons "to comprehend with all saints the length and breadth, the height and the depth" of the divine wisdom and goodness, as exemplified in the divine plan and its revelation. Indeed, from the Apostle's language, it is evident that even the angels (who were sometimes used of the Lord as his channels in communicating with the prophets, the mediums of his holy Spirit) were not permitted to understand the meaning of their communications, any more than were the prophets who wrote out the revelations for our benefit. R. 1418, E178

2 Peter Chapter 2

1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words, for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment,

5 and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly,

6 and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly,

7 and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked

8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)---

9 then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,

10 and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries,

11 whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.

12 But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption

13 and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you,

14 having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.

15 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness,

16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.

17 These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

18 For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.

19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption, for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

20 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.

21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A DOG RETURNS TO HIS OWN VOMIT," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

2:1-2 The early church was surrounded with many bitter and outspoken enemies, but against these the apostles never needed to warn the sheep. But continually they sought to put believers on their guard against false teachers, **professing** much, clothed as ministers of light, with morality etc., but teaching errors which would confuse and befog the minds of the saints, and tend to hinder them from the full accomplishment of their covenant of self-sacrifice. The great shepherd of the sheep warned them to take heed to His voice and to heed not the voice of strangers, intimating that others would seek to call the sheep in his name, and to direct them, whose leading would be contrary to his. —John 10:1-5.

The apostle Peter referred pointedly to this same evil when he said, (2 Pet. 2:1,2.) There were false prophets also among the people [Jews], even as there shall be false teachers **among you** who privily [in a subtle manner] shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them."

This does not signify that these teachers will deny our Lord as a person, nor deny his Lordship or authority over the church. Such a teacher never was countenanced in the church; none would recognize such an one as a Christian at all. He would be an out and out Infidel; and so open a course would prevent any deception of the sheep. On the contrary those whom the adversary has used to advance errors, have always been loud in their professions of faith in the Lord. They thus wear a garment of light, as Paul calls it, and the more successfully serve the error which they "privily" bring in and set before the church.

The seriousness of this which Peter calls "damnable heresy," is far reaching, and leads into a great variety of errors and heresies, reflecting against other truths and laying a foundation for other errors. Peter adds: "Many shall follow their destructive ways [destructive of the very foundation of hope and its corresponding **licence** in dealing with scriptures which oppose them] by reason of whom the way of truth [the true way of salvation—through the ransom—the way of the cross] will be reviled." R. 910

2:3 We are to distinguish them in the manner which our Lord and the apostles clearly indicated: however smooth, polished, educated, gentle, they may be on the surface, we must get to know them better than by surface indications before we may dare trust them as leaders of the flock—we must become intimately acquainted with them, their motives, ambitions, private life. This our Lord intimates by telling us to beware of them if they are ravenous, greedy, selfish, even though outwardly they may have a sanctimonious air. The Apostle speaks of these, saying that "grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock": "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you": "even denying the Lord that bought them." —Acts 20:29; 2 Pet. 2:1,3.

In looking for Christian brotherhood we should begin at the beginning and look for loyalty to God and to our Lord and to the Gospel message and to the brethren. Meekness, gentleness, patience, etc., are commendable qualities in any one, but they prove nothing of themselves. Does not the Apostle call attention to this when he says that some, with feigned words and smooth speeches, would make merchandise of you; that is to say, would use you for their own advantage, to prosper their own designs and ambitions? Is

not this the same thought expressed by another Apostle who exhorts us that we should that we should not love in word merely, but in deed and in truth? (1 John 3:18.) These words intimate that some do love merely in word – feigned words and smooth speeches. The real evidence of the sincerity or truthfulness of our love, as the Apostle points out, is evidenced by our deeds and not merely by smooth words. R. 3747, R. 4480

2:4 **Note:** The word translated "hell" is ***tartaroo*** and is not found anywhere else in the Bible.

The word **tartaroo**, used by Peter, very closely resembles **tartarus**, a word used in Grecian mythology as the name for **a dark abyss or prison**. But tartaroo seems to refer more to an act than to a place. The fall of the angels who sinned was from honor and dignity, into dishonor and condemnation, and the thought seems to be–– "God spared not the angels who sinned, but **degraded them**, and delivered them into chains of darkness." R. 2603

Key Reference: ***And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day. Jude 1:6***

We have given the suggestion that it would not be appropriate for the saints to judge the holy angels, for evidently the holy angels do not need any judgment. In the past there was one judgment of the angels; this is mentioned by St. Peter. (2 Pet. 2:4,5.) He says that in the time before the flood the angels had their trial; and that those angels who did not maintain their condition of loyalty to God were cast down to **tartarus**––that is, to our earth's atmosphere, there "restrained in chains of darkness until the Judgment of the Great Day." (*See also Jude 6*.) This "**Judgment** of the Great Day," to our understanding, means that in that Great Day another trial will come to those angels.

No one can understand God's methods except as he is guided by His Word, by the Spirit of the Truth. **God's dealings are different in different ages and for different purposes**. After the fall, mankind gradually became more and more estranged from the Lord. Many of the angels, who then had access to earth with powers of materialization, fell from their holy estate. Mankind became a prey to these angels who "lusted after strange flesh." (Genesis 6:1-4; Jude 6,7; 2 Peter 2:4, Diaglott.) This condition of things was finally overthrown by the great Deluge of Noah's day. R. 4879, R. 5706

2:5 With the deluge the Apostle Peter says the first world, the first heavens and earth, passed away––i.e., that dispensation, that order of things came to an end. (2 Pet. 2:5.) That was the dispensation in which the angels were permitted to mingle with men, assuming the human form for that purpose, the object being to influence and help mankind to retrieve their great loss by the fall. This, God knew they could not do; but in his wisdom he permitted the endeavor, foreseeing the ultimate utility of such an experiment.

God permitted the Deluge, and He was fully justified in the arrangement which blotted out the human family, except eight persons––righteous Noah and his family.

To the Christian mind it is quite sufficient attestation to the truthfulness of the account of the deluge, as given in Genesis, that our Lord, the great Teacher, made no criticism of it, but by referring to it clearly implied its truthfulness and general correctness. And

the evidence is still further strengthened by the fact that the Apostle Peter refers to it, and under the guidance of the holy spirit shows that it marked the close of the first dispensation, —as a great cataclysm of trouble, anarchy, symbolically called "fire," will mark the termination of the present dispensation, and prepare the way for the new era, called the new heavens and the new earth. —Matt. 24:37-39; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5; 3:6,7. R. 1615, SM61, R. 2843

2:6 Key Reference: ***As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Jude 1:7***

In this blotting out as a Divine punishment, the Apostle tells us, they were made an example of the ultimate doom that will come upon all who reject God's grace and die the Second Death. (2 Pet. 2:6.) However, the Sodomites and all of Adam's posterity are included in the Redemption work of Jesus. Hence they are no more dead than Abraham, but merely sleeping with their fathers, as Abraham sleeps with his fathers, waiting the glorious morning, when the Redeemer of Adam and his race shall take to Himself His great power, shall establish His Kingdom, bind Satan, glorify His Church, and begin His work of blessing the world.

The extreme wickedness of these men and of the world in general, as described by the inspired writer, seems indicative of almost total depravity— "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that EVERY imagination of the thoughts of his heart was ONLY EVIL, CONTINUALLY. (Gen. 6:5.) So God determined to wipe them all from the face of the earth, saving Noah, who "was perfect in his generations," and his family; that is, he was not of the mixed race, but was of pure Adamic stock; and his heart was right before God. —Gen. 6:9.

Geologists declare that the region of the Dead Sea, the former site of Sodom and Gomorrah, was a gas and oil and asphalt deposit, with a deep crevice which led down to subterranean fires; and that the connection established between these by an earthquake or by a lightning bolt would have resulted in the manner described as the experiences of Sodom. The gas, throwing burning oil and asphalt into the air, would have produced a rain of fire and brimstone – a death-dealing terror. But had there been no such reservoir of inflammables, the Lord would have been quite able to accomplish the same results by other means, or in such a case perhaps accomplished the destruction in another way. R. 5076, R. 1615, R. 5179

2:7 Key References: ***Genesis 13:1-8*** ***Genesis 19:12-29***

The Apostle Peter informs us that Lot was not in sympathy with the evils of Sodom, in the midst of which he lived. His family apparently had been all girls. These, except two, had intermarried with the Sodomites. Quite possibly it was the thought of marrying the daughters to prosperous husbands that, under the guidance of the mother, induced the family to settle in Sodom. How many others like Lot and his wife have made the serious

mistake of claiming more for the physical and temporal interests of their families than for their intellectual and moral welfare! The story of the flight of Lot, his wife and two unmarried daughters is simply told in our lesson. R. 5179

2:8 It would appear that Lot was less generous than his uncle—more selfish; and taking advantage of Abraham's liberal proposition he chose the rich, fertile valley of the Jordan —the land of Sodom, of which the record is that it was "like the garden of the Lord" (the Garden of Eden), and like the most favored portion of Egypt. Lot was a keen business man apparently, for his choice signified not only the richest of the grazing country, but additionally the best market for his flocks and herds; because the Jordan valley seems to have been a commercial highway frequented by traveling caravans, etc., the best of customers for sheep and cattle. Abraham and Lot together might have taken the Jordan valley at first, seeing its suitability to their occupation: no doubt the reason why Abraham avoided it is found in the fact of the wickedness of the people there, and that he did not wish to bring either himself or wife or servants into close contact with such people, preferring the less fertile district because of their separateness from such associations, with which he could not feel in harmony or fellowship.

Lot possessed much less faith and much less character than his uncle, but was also a good man, and his determination to make the country of the Jordan his home does not signify that he had fellowship with the Sodomites. On the contrary, the record is that their course "vexed his righteous soul." (2 Pet. 2:8.) He evidently was deluded, as many of the Lord's people of today are deluded, into association with evil influences for the sake of worldly prosperity. He no doubt persuaded himself that he could live separate from the contaminations of Sodom, and even exercise a moral influence over the unrighteous. How unwise, very unwise, his course really was may be seen in the light of his subsequent history.

The wisdom of Abraham stands out in striking contrast, and the two experiences furnish valuable lessons for all who are seeking the heavenly city and praying, Thy Kingdom come. Abraham's course illustrates our Lord's words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness and all these [needful] things shall be added unto you." Lot's course illustrates our Lord's words, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world!" Lot's quest for wealth, etc., no doubt brought rich returns, for he became a wealthy and influential man in Sodom, but his wealth and influence cost too much:

First, they cost his peace of mind, for "his righteous soul was vexed;" he had no real happiness.

Second, it cost him his children, sons and daughters, all but two unmarried ones, and even they apparently were blemished through their contact with evil example.

Third, And it cost him also his wife, whose sympathies for her children overbalanced her interest in the Lord and righteousness. It cost him additionally, in the end, all his flocks and herds and wealth, all of which went down in the fire from heaven upon the city of destruction.

There is a great lesson here for us all, especially for such lovers of righteousness as have the care, the guardianship of children: the lesson is that they should think less of earthly advantages, social, political and financial, and think more, much more, of the moral and spiritual influences and advantages obtainable through isolation from the evil which is in the world, —so far as possible "make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame [blemished through sin] be turned out of the way [of righteousness]." —Heb. 12:13. R. 2848

There are many amongst the Lord's people today who are much in the position of Lot. They do not in time take counsel of the Lord as to what they shall do, where they shall locate, but rather run to their own understanding, and yield to the wishes of those over whom the Lord has made them the responsible caretakers. They love their families, but not wisely; they do for them, but not to their best interests and eternal welfare. They are vexed from day to day by the wickedness around them, and yet they get themselves into that very position deliberately and intentionally. The lesson is that we should follow Abraham's course and not Lot's—we should think more of the eternal interests and less of the temporalities. R. 3939

2:9 So far as Divine Justice is concerned, God's provision is that all claims against mankind on the part of Justice shall be settled and closed in the end of this Gospel Age.

Every wrong deed, every wrong principle acted upon, has an evil effect upon character, as all right doing brings blessing. So mankind, in proportion as they have in this life obeyed or disobeyed privilege or knowledge, enjoyed and understood, will be elevated or degraded in character when they enter the next Age.

The Apostle says that God is not slack (slow) as men count slackness, but is long-suffering and patient (2 Pet. 3:9); and "He knows how to reserve the ungodly until the Day of Judgment to be punished." (2 Pet. 2:9.) Again we read, "Some men's sins are open, going beforehand to judgment, and others they follow after. (1 Tim. 5:24.) That is to say, there are people who do wrong and receive promptly the punishment for their wrong course. Thus they have opportunity of improving upon the past.

There are others who seem to do well, seem to prosper in earthly things; their eyes stand out with fatness; they seem to go unheeded in their wrong course, down to the very tomb. (Psa. 73:3-12.) Will these escape? We answer, "No." In the Day of Judgment they will get their lesson. In that Day of trial they will have much more difficulty than will those who have learned lessons from the tribulations of the present life. A man who has practised evil will require severe discipline before he will learn that the customs of the past will not be allowed. Since this New Order will be such that nothing will be allowed to hinder it, his course in this life, therefore, will then receive retribution, in the sense that it will be the result of his wrong condition. R. 4856

2:10-11 The Apostles Peter and Jude mention this class in almost the same language. (See Jude 11-16; 2 Pet. 2:10-22.) These all at one time had places amongst the elect in the Church. (None of them are of the world, which is not at present under trial or judgment, but whose trial will come by and by under the Millennial Kingdom.) These, instead of

walking after the Spirit in the footsteps of the Lord, in the way of sacrifice, are "walking after their own lusts [desires]; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" —they are men-pleasers because of their self-seeking, they are far from their covenant of consecration even unto death. (Jude 16) Peter's description of this class is still more explicit. He declares that they were such as had "escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and had become entangled again therein and overcome," like "the dog returning to his own vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." He likens these to Balaam forsaking the ways of righteousness for earthly gain. His words imply that this class will be found principally amongst the teachers of the Church, and chiefly in the end of this age, and that part of their evil course will be to "speak evil of dignities" —of those whom God has honored and "set" in the body. 2 Pet. 2:1,10 F166

2:12-22 The warning here is not against those who never knew the truth, but against those who have known it and have been blessed by it, and who have afterward turned away from it; of whom the Apostle Peter speaks, saying, "If, after they escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning [they are worse than those who have always been of the world]. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according the true proverb, "The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Why do they do so? Because the dog and the sow nature and disposition are there still, and only wait for opportunities and circumstances to prove it. So also says John: they that go out from us – who desert the truth and its interests—do so because they were not of us (2 Pet. 2:20-22; 1 John 2:19), because the old fleshly mind and disposition are still there. R. 1589

Balaam, it will be remembered, feared the Lord, and as his prophet could not think of doing otherwise than according to the strict letter of the Lord's injunction; but he did not have the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of Love; and hence, when a reward was offered him if he would curse Israel, he was willing (in order to secure the reward) to conform to the evil proposition in spirit, in intention, while outwardly refraining from saying aught except as the Lord indicated. So, there are some amongst Christians who have a respect for the letter of the divine word through fear, but who lack the holy spirit of Love, and who by reason of a perverted love for wealth, etc., are willing to engage in various practices which come as near to the injury of the Lord's cause as is possible, without openly opposing him. Some of these Balaams are in the ministry and for the sake of salary, and the maintenance of their positions, and the friendship of wealthy Balaks, are willing to preach doctrines which they do not believe (respecting eternal torment, etc.), and in various ways to cast stumbling blocks before spiritual Israel. (Num. 22:7; 31:16; Rev. 2:14.) The Apostle mentions these Balaams as being specially represented by false teachers in the nominal Church. —See 2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14. R. 2204

Key Reference: ***As a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly. Proverbs 26:11***

2 Peter Chapter 3

1 Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder),

2 that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior,

3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,

4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water,

6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.

7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat, both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless,

15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation---as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,

16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.

18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever.

Amen.

3:1 While those of our number who have been for some time familiar with Present Truth well know the presentations which St. Peter gives in this general letter to the Church, it is well that we frequently have our pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance concerning these important things, "lest at any time we should let them slip." —2 Peter 3:1,2; Hebrews 2:1.

We should especially seek to please our brethren to their edification. This does not mean that we should necessarily please them according to the flesh; for this would, in many cases be quite the reverse of their edification. If we please the brethren rightly, we shall rather "stir up their pure minds," their spiritual minds, to love and faith and zeal, to good works. R. 5863, R. 5556

3:2 The Apostolic Epistles were written to the various local congregations or churches, and were directed to be publicly read, and to be exchanged among the churches; and the same authority was claimed for them by their writers as that which was accorded to the Old Testament Scriptures. (1 Thes. 5:27; Col. 4:16; 2 Pet. 3:2,15,16; Heb. 1:1,2 and 2:1-4.) These letters and the five historical books were carefully preserved by the different congregations, and were appealed to as authority in matters of doctrine.

The letters of the apostles, claiming, as they did, divine authority equal to that of the Old Testament Scriptures, were treasured and guarded with special care by the various congregations of the early church. The New Testament was completed by the Book of The Revelation, about the close of the first century A.D., after which, these epistles, etc., began to be collected for more permanent preservation. R. 1146

3:3-4 The Apostle Peter describes how some of the unfaithful servants and hypocrites will scoff during the **presence** of the Lord, even as they scoffed in the days of Noah. (2 Pet. 3:3,4,10,12) Notice that the Apostle wrote to the Church, and that the scoffers he describes are **in** the nominal church and professedly interested in the Lord's work and plan, and believers, therefore, that he **will come some time**. The scoffing described is on the very subject here noticed, and such as we hear and shall hear from professed Christians, whenever the subject of the Lord's presence and harvest work, etc., is presented. Christians generally, until they investigate the subject, have such ideas of literal manifestations of fire, trumpets, voices, etc., and of seeing the Lord descending through the air, a shining body of flesh, that when they hear of his invisible **presence**, without taking time to investigate a subject upon which they feel so sure, busied with worldly plans, and intoxicated with the spirit of the world, they will dismiss the matter quickly as unworthy of investigation.

It is to this class of professed Christians that the Apostle refers, saying, "In the last days [in the closing years of the Gospel age—in the "harvest"] shall come scoffers, walking after their own desires [plans, theories, etc.], asking, Where is the promise of his **presence** [**parousia**]? for ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as at present from the beginning of creation." When referred to our Lord's statement (Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26) that in **his days**, in the days of his **presence**, things would indeed continue as before; and that, as in Noah's day, men would be eating, drinking, marrying, planting and building; and that, as then, the world would **know not** of his presence, and read not

the signs of the speedy and great changes just at hand, they are too busy to consider the testimony carefully, and only continue to scoff.

Familiar with the conditions, the trials, the difficulties, the perplexities and the suggestions of many—as the Apostle predicted, that all things will continue as they were from the beginning of the world (2 Pet. 3:4)—for such reasons many shut the eyes of their understanding to the most remarkable condition of affairs in our day.
B167, HG11

3:5 Ah! says Peter, they forget the great change which occurred in the days of Noah; and then, under the symbol of fire, he describes the overwhelming flood of trouble which shall shortly overtake the whole world, utterly overthrowing all civil and ecclesiastical rule [the heavens] and melting the entire social fabric [the earth] —producing anarchy and social chaos until the new heavens [ruling powers—the Kingdom of God] shall be fully established, as well as a new earth [society organized on a new and better basis, of love, equality and righteousness]. The Apostle then reminds us (verse 8) that this Day of the Lord's **presence**, for which the Church has long hoped and looked, is a thousand-year day—the Millennium of Christ's reign.

St. Peter indicates that this great change will come very suddenly—a radical change such as came in the days of Noah, a very sudden catastrophe, the coming of which will be scoffed at by those having a form of godliness without its power. (2 Peter 3:3,4.) This catastrophe he pictures as a great conflagration. The "heavens" will take fire and be consumed. Then the "earth" will take fire and be burned up. The "elements" will all dissolve with the fervency of the heat. R. 5863

The Apostle says they are "willingly ignorant"; and Jesus, "They hear not, neither do they understand"; and again, the Lord through the Prophet says, "My people perish for lack of knowledge." (2 Pet. 3:5; Matt. 13:13; Hosea 4:6.) Indeed the majority of professing Christians are careless, indifferent to what the Lord had caused to be written for their admonition and encouragement and assistance in this "evil Day." Such are not of the "Very Elect." The latter, as the Apostle shows, will not be in darkness that that Day should overtake them as a thief.

The former dispensation was called "the old world" (2 Pet. 2:5). And this, "the world that now is;" and that which is to follow, "the new heavens and new earth;" or "world to come." In the world that was before the flood, man was without law or national government; and the result was utter corruption. The corruption of its **heavens** or angelic class brought degradation and disaster to the **earth** class, humanity.

All three of these "worlds" or dispensations are connected with our planet, the earth. Following this figure, the Apostle divides these "worlds" or dispensations into heaven and earth, by the heavens referring to the spirit beings and influences, and by the earth referring to humanity subjected to those spiritual influences. Thus in the "world" or dispensation which ended at the flood, the angels, fallen and unfallen, constituted the heavens and mankind the earth of that dispensation. B167, HG11, SM288, OV27

The Three Worlds

It should be remembered that this earth is the basis of all these "worlds" and dispensations, and that though ages pass and dispensations change, still the earth continues--- "The earth abideth forever." (Eccl. 1:4) Carrying out the same figure, Peter calls each of these periods a separate heavens and earth. Here the word **heavens** symbolizes the higher or spiritual controlling powers, and **earth** symbolizes human government and social arrangements. Thus the first heavens and earth, or the order and arrangement of things then existing, having served their purpose, ended at the flood. But the physical heavens (sky and atmosphere), and the physical earth, did not pass away: they remained. So likewise the present world (heavens and earth) will pass away with a great noise, fire and melting---confusion, trouble and dissolution. The strong man (Satan), being bound, will struggle to retain his power. The present order or arrangement of government and society, not that of the physical sky and earth, will pass away. The present **heavens** (powers of spiritual control) must give place to the "new heavens" ---Christ's spiritual control. The present **earth** (human society as now organized under Satan's control) must (symbolically) melt and be dissolved, in the beginning of the "Day of the Lord," which "shall burn as an oven." (Mal. 4:1) It will be succeeded by "a new earth," i.e., society reorganized in harmony with earth's new Prince---Christ. Righteousness, peace and love will rule among men when present arrangements have given place to the new and better kingdom, the basis of which will be the strictest justice.

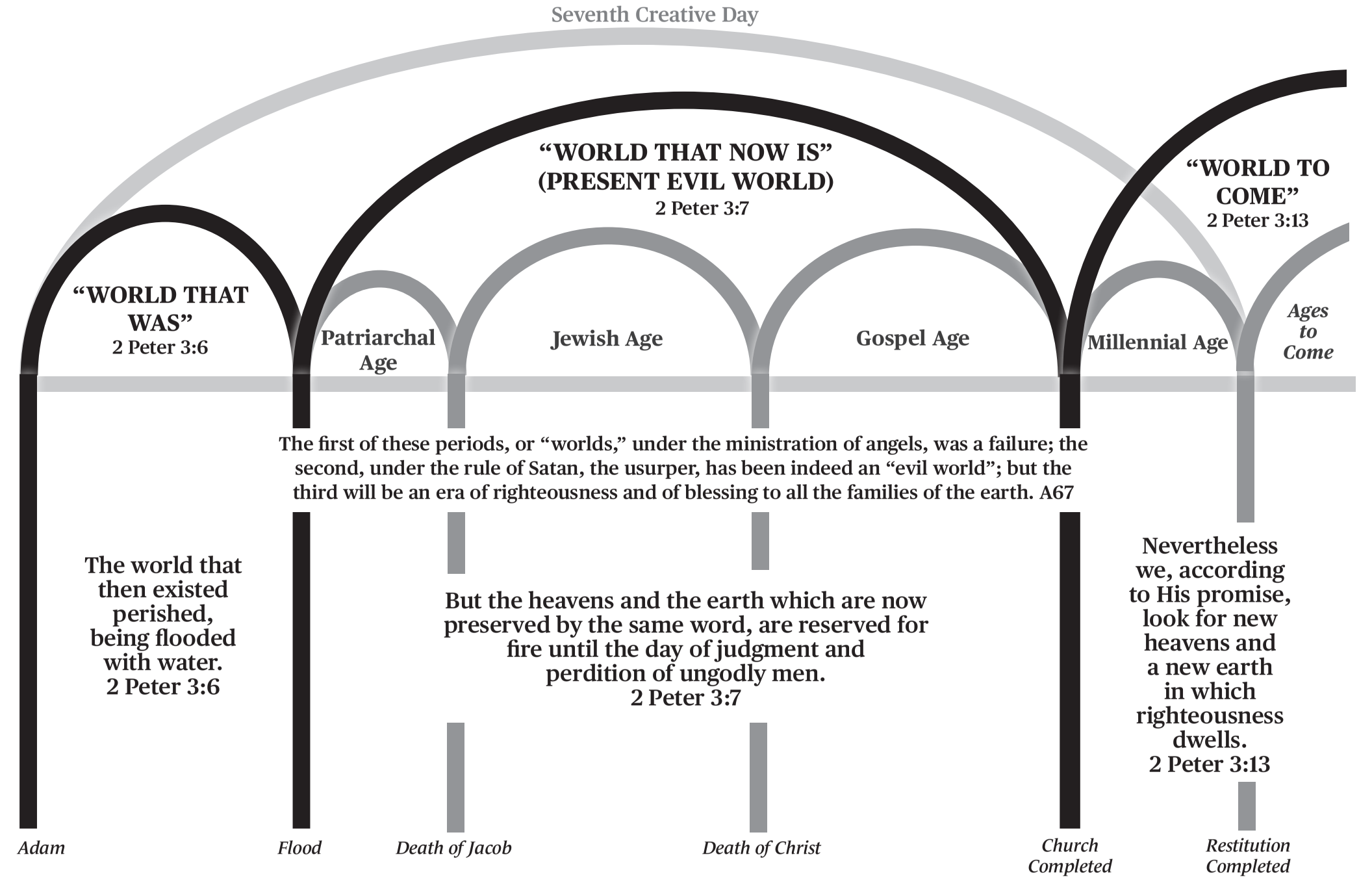
The first of these great epochs ("worlds") was not subdivided: God's method of dealing with men did not vary during all that time---from Adam's fall to the flood. God had given man his law, written in his very nature; but after he had sinned he left him measurably to his own course, which was downward, "evil, and that continually," that thus man might realize his folly, and that the wisdom of God in commanding absolute obedience might be made manifest. That dispensation ended with a flood, which took away all but faithful Noah and his family. Thus the first dispensation not only manifested the disastrous effects of sin, but showed that the tendency of sin is downward to greater degradation and misery, and proves the necessity of Jehovah's interposition, if the recovery of "that which was lost" ---man's first estate---is ever to be accomplished.

The second epoch, or "world that now is," includes three ages, each a step in the plan of God for the overthrow of evil. Each step is higher than that preceding it, and carries the plan forward and nearer to completion.

The third great epoch--- "the world to come" ---future from the second advent of Christ, comprises the Millennial Age, or "times of restitution"; and following it are other "ages to come," the particulars of which are not revealed. Present revelations treat of man's recovery from sin, and not of the eternity of glory to follow.

The first age in the "world that now is" we call the **PATRIARCHAL AGE**, or dispensation, because during that period God's dealings and favors were with a few individuals only, the remainder of mankind being almost ignored. Such favored ones were the patriarchs Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Each of these in turn seems to have been God's favored one. At the death of Jacob, that age or order of dealing ended.

The Three "Worlds" from 2 Peter Chapter 3



At Jacob's death, his descendants were first called "the twelve tribes of Israel," and were together recognized of God as his "peculiar people"; and through typical sacrifices they were typically "a holy nation," separated from other nations for a particular purpose, and therefore to enjoy certain special favors. The time allotted to this feature of the divine plan, beginning here and ending at the death of Christ, we designate the **JEWISH AG**E, or the Law dispensation. During that age God specially blessed that nation. He gave them his law; he made a special covenant with them; he gave them the Tabernacle, whose shekinah glory in the Most Holy represented Jehovah's presence with them as their Leader and King. To them he sent the prophets, and finally his Son.

Jesus performed his miracles and taught in their midst, and would neither go to others himself, nor permit his disciples to go to the surrounding nations. He sent them out, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 10:5,6) And again he said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 15:24) That this national favor ended with their rejection and crucifixion of Jesus is shown by Jesus' words, when, five days before his crucifixion, he declared, "Your house is left unto you desolate." Matt. 23:38

There, at Jesus' death, a new age began—the CHRISTIAN AGE or **GOSPEL DISPENSATION**, wherein should be heralded good tidings of justification, not to the Jew only, but to all nations; for Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man. During this Gospel age also there is a class called to special favor, to whom special promises are made; namely, those who by faith accept Christ Jesus as their Redeemer and Lord, following in his footsteps. The gospel proclamation has gone hither and thither through the earth for nearly nineteen hundred years, so that it can now be said that it has been preached more or less in every nation. It has not converted nations—it was not designed to do so in this age; but it has selected here and there some, in all a "little flock," as Jesus had foretold (Luke 12:32), to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom in an age to follow this.

With this age the "**present evil world**" ends; and mark well that while God has been thus permitting the predominance and reign of evil, to the seeming detriment of his cause, nevertheless his deep designs have been steadily progressing according to a fixed and definite plan, and in the exact order of the seasons which he has appointed. In the end of this age, and the dawn of its successor, the Millennial age, Satan is to be bound and his power overthrown, preparatory to the establishment of Christ's kingdom and the beginning of "the world to come, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Millennium, signifying a thousand years, is by common consent used as the name for the period mentioned in Rev. 20:4—the thousand years of Christ's reign, the first age in the "**world to come**." During the **Millennial age**, there will be a restitution of all things lost by the fall of Adam (Acts 3:19-21), and before its close all tears shall have been wiped away. Beyond its boundary, in the ages of blessedness to follow, there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain. The former things will have passed away. (Rev. 21:4) God's revelations particularize no further, and there we stop. A69-A73



3:6 • *See also comments for 2 Peter 2:5*

At the flood the waters rose until the hills were covered, and then the mountains; and when the waters subsided, the tops of the mountains and the hills appeared again. (v. 5) The first Epoch, or order of things, was overwhelmed and brought to an end by a deluge of water.

Since that first "world" (heavens and earth, or that **order of things**) passed away at the time of the flood, it follows that it must have been a **different** order from the present, and hence that the prince of this present evil world was not the prince of that order which preceded this—the dispensation before the flood—however widely his influence was then exerted and felt.

That angels were the rulers of that epoch is not only indicated by all references to that period, but may be reasonably inferred from the Apostle's remark when contrasting the present dispensation with the past and the future. He endeavors to show both the righteousness and the enduring character of the future rulership of the world, saying, "The world to come hath he not put in subjection to the angels." No, it is put under the control of our Lord Jesus and his joint-heirs, and hence it shall not only be more righteous than the present rule of Satan, but it shall be more successful than was the previous rule by the angels. —Heb. 2:2,5. HG11, R. 5161, R. 1677

3:7 He says: "The world that was, being overflowed with water, perished. [Not the literal earth and literal heavens ceased there, but that dispensation or arrangement of things, existing before the flood, passed away.] But the heavens and the earth which are now [the present dispensation] by the same word [of divine authority] are kept in store, reserved unto fire." The fact that the water was literal leads some to believe that the fire also must be literal, but this by no means follows. The temple of God once was of literal stones, but that does not set aside the fact that the Church, which is the true temple, is built up a spiritual building, a holy temple, not of earthly material. Noah's ark was literal, too, but it typified Christ and the power in him which will replenish and reorganize society.

"The Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night [unobservedly], in the which the heavens [present powers of the air, of which Satan is the chief or prince] shall pass away with a great [hissing] noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth [social organization] also, and the works that are therein [pride, rank, aristocracy, royalty], shall be burned up. The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens [the new spiritual power—Christ's kingdom] and a new earth" [earthly society organized on a new basis—on the basis of love and justice, rather than of might and oppression]. 2 Peter 3:6,7,10-13

It should be remembered that some of the apostles were prophets as well—notably Peter, John and Paul. And while as apostles they were God's mouthpieces to expound the utterances of preceding prophets for the benefit of the Church, they were also used of God as prophets to predict things to come, which, as they become due to be fulfilled,

become meat in due season for the household of faith, to dispense which, God in his own time raises up suitable servants or expounders. (See our Lord's statement of this fact–– Matt. 24:45,46.) The apostles as prophets were moved upon to write things which, not being due in their day, they could but imperfectly appreciate, even as it was with the Old Testament prophets (1 Pet. 1:12,13), though, like them, their words were specially guided and directed so that they have a depth of meaning of which they were not aware when using them.

It should be remembered that this earth is the basis of all these "Worlds" and Dispensations, and that though ages pass and Dispensations change, still the earth continues–– "The earth abideth forever." (Eccl. 1:4) Carrying out the same figure, St. Peter calls each of these periods a separate Heavens and Earth. Here the word **Heavens** symbolizes the higher or spiritual controlling powers, and **Earth** symbolizes human government and social arrangements. Thus the First Heavens and Earth, or the order and arrangement of things then existing, having served their purpose, ended at the flood. But the physical heavens (sky and atmosphere), and the physical earth, did not pass away––they remained.

So likewise the present World (heavens and earth) will pass away with a great noise, fire and melting-confusion, trouble and dissolution. The strong man (Satan), being bound, will struggle to retain his power. The present order or arrangement of government and society, not that of the physical sky and earth, will pass away. The present Heavens (powers of spiritual control) must give place to the "New Heavens"––Christ's spiritual control, soon to be established.

The present Earth (human society as now organized under Satan's control) must symbolically melt and be dissolved, in the beginning of the "Day of the Lord," which "shall burn as an oven." (Mal. 4:1) It will be succeeded by "a New Earth," i.e., society reorganized in harmony with earth's new Prince––Christ. A318, A319, HG538

3:8 God arranged a great Week of Seven Days for His great work of bringing man to perfection. Six of these Days prepared our planet to receive Adam as its lord and earthly king, an image of his Creator. The Seventh Day, which there began, is not yet completed ––it lacks a thousand years of completion. During that period, the Bible tells us, Earth will be brought to a Paradise condition and man will be restored by his Redeemer to God's image.

Six great Thousand-Year Periods or Days have passed since Adam was created, according to Bible chronology. We are now in the dawning of the great Seventh Day or Sabbath Day of human experience. God has promised that this Seventh Day of a thousand years will be very different from the preceding Six Days, in which mankind has experienced a reign of Sin and Death. The Seventh Day of a thousand years is Scripturally called the "Day of Christ," and by many it is styled the Millennium. In it Satan and Sin are to be overthrown, righteousness is to be established by the Redeemer, and mankind, purchased by the precious blood at Calvary; are all to have full opportunity for arising from present degradation to re-attainment of the image and likeness of God, lost in Eden by Adam's disobedience. R. 5139

3:9 The Apostle says that God is not slack (slow) as men count slackness, but is long-suffering and patient (2 Pet. 3:9); and "He knows how to reserve the ungodly until the Day of Judgment to be punished." (2 Pet. 2:9.) Again we read, "Some men's sins are open, going beforehand to judgment, and others they follow after. (I Tim. 5:24.) That is to say, there are people who do wrong and receive promptly the punishment for their wrong course. Thus they have opportunity of improving upon the past.

There are others who seem to do well, seem to prosper in earthly things; their eyes stand out with fatness; they seem to go unheeded in their wrong course, down to the very tomb. (Psa. 73:3-12.) Will these escape? We answer, "No." In the Day of Judgment they will get their lesson. In that Day of trial they will have much more difficulty than will those who have learned lessons from the tribulations of the present life.

During the present time, that we may see how the course of sin would result, the Lord ignores very much that is unholy, hateful and abominable in his sight and does not swiftly mete out the deserved punishments. But he declares that "He will not always chide [reprove], neither will he keep [back, restrain] his anger forever." (Psa. 103:9.) Though it may at present appear as though the Lord is slack in the fulfillment of his promises, both in regard to well-doers and to evil-doers, it would be a mistake to suppose thus. The Lord is not slack, as men count slackness, says the Apostle (2 Pet. 3:9), but is plenteous in mercy, not desiring that any should perish, but that all should turn unto him and live. Nevertheless, every good deed shall in due time be remembered and rewarded, and every malicious deed likewise: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." God is merely biding his time, letting his will and word and character be misunderstood by some and misrepresented by others, letting men have an experience with doing their own wills and trying their own plans and theories, that thus the **lesson** of sin and its tendencies and results may be clearly seen and appreciated by both angels and men.
R. 4856, R. 1272

3:10 The words of the Prophet Malachi refer to the close of the present Gospel Age:

Key Reference: ***Who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. Mal. 3:2***

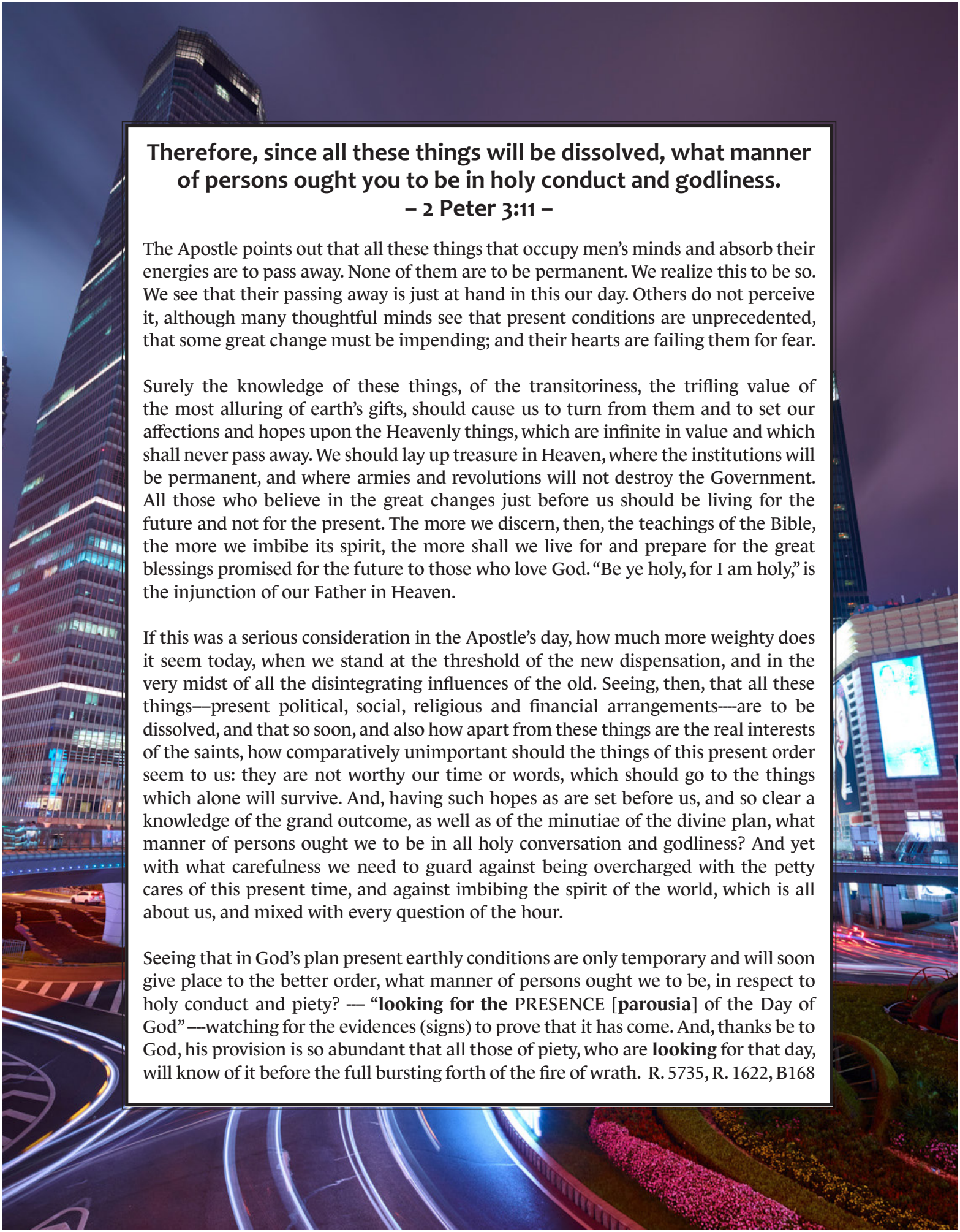
It is the same Day prophesied by the Apostle Paul when he declared, "The fire of that Day shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Corinthians 3:13.) It is the Day of which the Apostle Peter wrote so graphically when he said that in that great Day of the Lord the heavens should be on fire and the elements should melt with fervent heat, and that the earth and all the works therein should be burned up. (2 Peter 3:10.) It is the Day of which the Prophet Zephaniah spoke when he said that in the great Day of the Lord all the earth should be devoured with the fire of God's jealousy. (Zephaniah 3:8.) Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many of the faithful Prophets of God prophesied of this Day. The Prophet Daniel was instructed by the angel of the Lord that in that Day there should be a "Time of Trouble such as never was since there was a nation." (Daniel 12:1.) Our Lord Jesus Himself verified this prophecy, and added that never afterwards should there be such a time. ––Matthew 24:21,22.

The Scriptures call this Day "the Day of the Lord," "the Day of Jehovah," "the Day of God," "the Day of Christ," "the Day of Vengeance," "that great and notable Day," etc. It is the Day in which the Old Order is to perish and the glorious New Order is to be ushered in. In foretelling this Day, both the Prophets and the Apostles speak of the class which will **stand** in this Day when all others shall fall. St. Paul says that everything which can be shaken down will be; and that only the Kingdom which will then be set up, and which cannot be shaken, will remain. (Hebrews 12:25-29.) The present order of society —the nominal church systems, financial institutions, political institutions—***all***—will go down.

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief [unobserved by the world], in the which the heavens [present ecclesiastical powers] shall pass away with a great noise [tumult and confusion], and the elements [the various parties and sects composing it, split and torn by discordant views] shall melt with fervent heat [the heat of public discussion and investigation]: the earth also [society as at present organized under civil and ecclesiastical authority] and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (destroyed, in the strife and friction caused by increasing knowledge combined with selfishness. This will not be a literal fire, but, as described by the prophets, the fire of divine jealousy —Zeph. 1:18; 3:8). (2 Pet. 3:10.) Already the noise and tumult, which shall thus eventuate in world-wide anarchy, are distinctly heard in every nation: for the day of the Lord has indeed begun, and the heat of human passion is growing more and more intense daily, and the great time of trouble is very near.

We are to remember that the Second Coming of our Lord is to bring a time of refreshing and of restitution to all mankind (Acts 3:19-21); and we must interpret these symbols denoting trouble in harmony with this Scriptural declaration. The word "heavens" is a figurative term for the present religious institutions—ecclesiasticism. The fire will extend to the social structure, the social order of things. The social, political, financial and ecclesiastical systems together make up our present order. The ecclesiastical systems will, we believe, go into destruction first, according to the Bible. The fire will next affect the social and industrial organization—merchandise, capital and labor, society, etc. It will devour the capitalistic elements, the banking elements, the political elements, the religious elements, the industrial elements. All these will be "melted," "dissolved" —they will separate, part company, fail to keep together, and will be swept away.

The Apostle's statement respecting the Church implies that this judgment, or testing, or fiery trial will begin with the Church and extend to the world. If it "begin first with us" what will the end be to those who make no pretense of following the Gospel message? The Apostle again states that the "fire of that day shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Cor. 3:13.) This we understand to refer especially to the Church. Every one in the Church is to be tried; his work is to be tried. However, in great measure it will be a trying time for all the world as well; all inequity and injustice will be exposed, reprobated and destroyed. And a great deal of burning, heart-burning, and headaches and prostration are caused today by various exposures of one kind or another as the time advances. No doubt that Day will bring forth further developments and trouble until the prophecies respecting it shall have been completely fulfilled—until the picture of utter destruction of everything evil, both root and branch, is carried out. —Mal. 4:1.
R. 5916, R. 3215, R. 5864, R. 4628



Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.
– 2 Peter 3:11 –

The Apostle points out that all these things that occupy men's minds and absorb their energies are to pass away. None of them are to be permanent. We realize this to be so. We see that their passing away is just at hand in this our day. Others do not perceive it, although many thoughtful minds see that present conditions are unprecedented, that some great change must be impending; and their hearts are failing them for fear.

Surely the knowledge of these things, of the transitoriness, the trifling value of the most alluring of earth's gifts, should cause us to turn from them and to set our affections and hopes upon the Heavenly things, which are infinite in value and which shall never pass away. We should lay up treasure in Heaven, where the institutions will be permanent, and where armies and revolutions will not destroy the Government. All those who believe in the great changes just before us should be living for the future and not for the present. The more we discern, then, the teachings of the Bible, the more we imbibe its spirit, the more shall we live for and prepare for the great blessings promised for the future to those who love God. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," is the injunction of our Father in Heaven.

If this was a serious consideration in the Apostle's day, how much more weighty does it seem today, when we stand at the threshold of the new dispensation, and in the very midst of all the disintegrating influences of the old. Seeing, then, that all these things—present political, social, religious and financial arrangements—are to be dissolved, and that so soon, and also how apart from these things are the real interests of the saints, how comparatively unimportant should the things of this present order seem to us: they are not worthy our time or words, which should go to the things which alone will survive. And, having such hopes as are set before us, and so clear a knowledge of the grand outcome, as well as of the minutiae of the divine plan, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? And yet with what carefulness we need to guard against being overcharged with the petty cares of this present time, and against imbibing the spirit of the world, which is all about us, and mixed with every question of the hour.

Seeing that in God's plan present earthly conditions are only temporary and will soon give place to the better order, what manner of persons ought we to be, in respect to holy conduct and piety? — "**looking for the** PRESENCE [**parousia**] of the Day of God"—watching for the evidences (signs) to prove that it has come. And, thanks be to God, his provision is so abundant that all those of piety, who are **looking** for that day, will know of it before the full bursting forth of the fire of wrath. R. 5735, R. 1622, B168

3:11-12 In 2 Peter 3:12 the Apostle's words signify that there will be a great conflagration and that the heavens also will be on fire, but that, nevertheless, there will be a new order of things, to take the place of the old order; and under this new order of things there shall come a blessing to all in the earth. The word "fire," in this sense, signifies destruction of the present order of things, of the ***kosmos***—not the ***ge***, the earth, but the social system, society as at present organized.

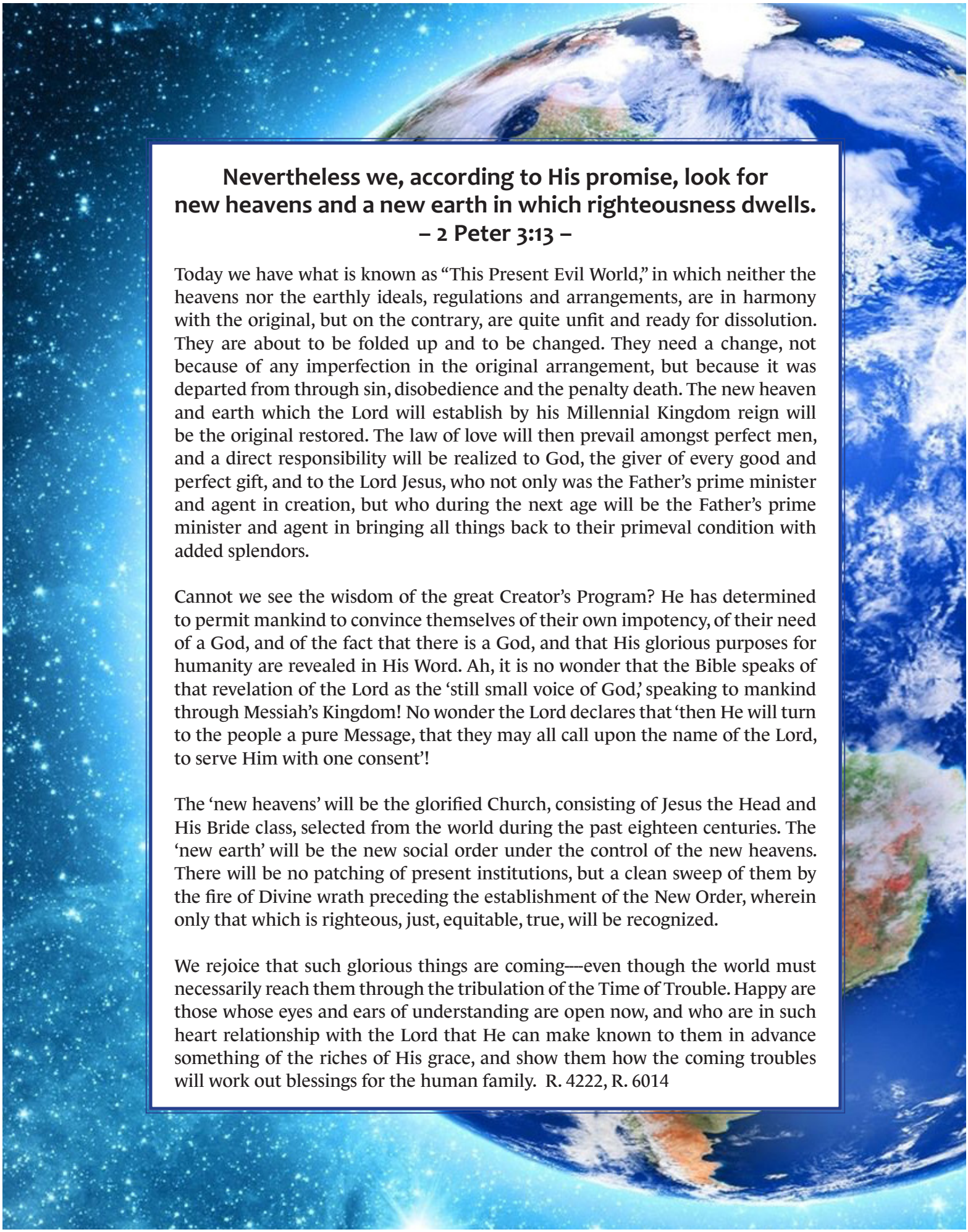
St. Peter apparently described this sign of the Son of Man in the heavens, revealed in flaming fire. His words are, "The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved," and "the earth also [shall take fire] and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10-12.) Let us not make the mistake of our forefathers in supposing that these descriptions mean a literal burning of the literal earth. Let us, on the contrary, realize that the symbolical earth and the symbolical heavens are to catch fire and pass away with a great commotion, while the physical earth will remain practically as it is, and will begin to undergo the transforming influences of Restitution under the new King, the Restorer of all things—The Christ.

It will be noticed that St. Peter mentions the fire as coming to the heavens before it reaches the earth, in just the same order that Jesus stated the matter. The sign, manifestation, of the flaming fire of judgments will appear in the heavens; and subsequently the sign of the Son of Man in judgment will be seen coming nearer and nearer to earth's affairs, with a view to purging them absolutely from everything sinful, selfish, unjust.

We are told that the elements will melt with fervent heat. We see the Capitalistic element and the Labor element separating, the one from the other. We see the preparations for the great conflagration, the great Time of Trouble. We sometimes speak of it in this language, saying, "Things are getting very hot." They will presently be so hot that spontaneous combustion will set in. And the fire of that Day will be so extreme and its results so drastic as to fulfill the Master's words that unless those days should be shortened no flesh could survive.

But because of the Elect, because of the Kingdom which will then be set up, those days will be shortened—brought to an end. Nothing will be destroyed except that which is injurious. The world-wide results of that flaming fire of Divine judgments will be corrective, preparing men's hearts for the blessings which the Lord is prepared then to give. Thus it is written, "When the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." —Isa. 26:9. R. 4990, SM422

3:13 Paul was given a glimpse of the next dispensation, or, as he calls it, "the world to come." He says he was "caught away" (physically or mentally, or both, he could not tell, things were so real to his view) down the stream of time to the new condition of things, the "new heaven," hence the "third heaven." He thus saw things as they will be under the spiritual control of Christ, things which he might not disclose. (2 Cor. 12:2-4) Doubtless these were the same things which John afterward saw, and was permitted to express to the Church in **symbols**, which may only be understood as they become due. John, in the revelation given to him by our Lord on the Isle of Patmos, was in vision carried down through this Christian Age and its changing scenes of church and state, to the end of the present evil world, or epoch, and there in prophetic visions he saw Satan bound, Christ



Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.
– 2 Peter 3:13 –

Today we have what is known as "This Present Evil World," in which neither the heavens nor the earthly ideals, regulations and arrangements, are in harmony with the original, but on the contrary, are quite unfit and ready for dissolution. They are about to be folded up and to be changed. They need a change, not because of any imperfection in the original arrangement, but because it was departed from through sin, disobedience and the penalty death. The new heaven and earth which the Lord will establish by his Millennial Kingdom reign will be the original restored. The law of love will then prevail amongst perfect men, and a direct responsibility will be realized to God, the giver of every good and perfect gift, and to the Lord Jesus, who not only was the Father's prime minister and agent in creation, but who during the next age will be the Father's prime minister and agent in bringing all things back to their primeval condition with added splendors.

Cannot we see the wisdom of the great Creator's Program? He has determined to permit mankind to convince themselves of their own impotency, of their need of a God, and of the fact that there is a God, and that His glorious purposes for humanity are revealed in His Word. Ah, it is no wonder that the Bible speaks of that revelation of the Lord as the 'still small voice of God,' speaking to mankind through Messiah's Kingdom! No wonder the Lord declares that 'then He will turn to the people a pure Message, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent'!

The 'new heavens' will be the glorified Church, consisting of Jesus the Head and His Bride class, selected from the world during the past eighteen centuries. The 'new earth' will be the new social order under the control of the new heavens. There will be no patching of present institutions, but a clean sweep of them by the fire of Divine wrath preceding the establishment of the New Order, wherein only that which is righteous, just, equitable, true, will be recognized.

We rejoice that such glorious things are coming—even though the world must necessarily reach them through the tribulation of the Time of Trouble. Happy are those whose eyes and ears of understanding are open now, and who are in such heart relationship with the Lord that He can make known to them in advance something of the riches of His grace, and show them how the coming troubles will work out blessings for the human family. R. 4222, R. 6014

reigning, and the new heaven and the new earth established; for the former heaven and earth were passed away. Rev. 21:1

Nevertheless, we [we who have come into covenant relationship with the Lord—we, unlike the rest of the world, know of the divine plan and], according to his promise, look for new heavens [the Kingdom of God—to be established in power and great glory] and a new earth [a new organization of society under the rulership of Christ and his glorified bride, the Church] wherein dwelleth righteousness." Blessed assurance! how favored are we above the people of the world who have not this knowledge! A70, R. 3215

3:14 In view of this approaching dissolution, now at the very door, what should be our attitude of heart? What should be the course of those who are prospective citizens of the great Government about to be established, which will control the affairs of earth under the headship of Christ Jesus, earth's rightful King?

"Wherefore, brethren, seeing that ye look for these things [the overthrow of the existing order and the establishment of the glorious Kingdom of God's dear Son], **be diligent** that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless"; for our Lord "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy....Amen." —2 Peter 3:14; Jude 24,25.

How shall we regard these things? Surely, dear brethren, it will be with thoughtful and reverent hearts! Surely we shall watch and pray, lest "a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of us should seem to come short of it!" (Hebrews 4:1.) We shall guide our course with the greatest carefulness that we may make our calling and election sure. R. 5864, R. 5990

3:15 The Apostle's words near the close of his Epistle, should be of special comfort and cheer to us now, in this brief waiting time since the close of Gentile Times. He says, "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation." (2 Peter 3:15.) How glad of this little extended time some of the Lord's dear ones are, who have come into the knowledge of Present Truth and consecrated themselves to God since October 1914! And how glad are many of Christ's followers who have longer known of these precious truths, that the Lord has mercifully granted them a little further time to make their calling and election sure! Perhaps some of these were not ready when the Gentile Times closed.

Impulsive Peter seemed to gain more self-control, and later we find him boldly and freely endorsing the teaching and course of his "beloved brother Paul" who had so plainly reproved and rebuked him. R. 5864, R. 552, R. 1041

• *See also "Peter Confronted by Paul" on p. 209*

3:15-16 From the reading of this chapter, it is evident that "these things," referred to by the Apostle, are the things relating to the three worlds and the three heavens of which he was writing. In 2 Cor. 12:1-4, the Apostle Paul relates how that special visions and revelations had been given him by the Lord, and among these was a view of the "third heaven," and of "paradise." This was a glimpse of "the new heavens and the new earth" mentioned in the 13th verse of this chapter. St. Paul was not permitted to give the details

of what had been revealed to him, nevertheless, these revelations influenced all of his writings and caused him to give such expressions as were hard to be understood, but which, in the light of subsequent events, are now being clearly revealed to the sincere and earnest student of the Scriptures. It is now seen that the "unlearned and unstable" have wrested many of the Apostle's statements from their true connection and significance, Scriptures that apply to "the new heavens and the new earth" have been variously warped and twisted from their true application and forcibly assigned to "the heavens that are now" and "this present evil world." As an illustration of this: the Apostle explains that "God has appointed a day (a thousand-year day---2 Pet. 3:8) in the which He will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31), yet many have misapplied this statement and have declared that the world is on trial (being judged) at present. Q830

3:16-17 This exhortation applies to the Lord's consecrated people living at the present time. The proof of this is found in the context: the Apostle has just been portraying some of the events connected with the day of the Lord in which we are living---the "Day of Vengeance." In **verse ten** he has pointed out that the present age will end with the dissolution of the symbolic "heavens" and the symbolic "earth," which, as we have elsewhere shown, signifies the utter disruption of the present social and ecclesiastical order. In **verse thirteen** he points out that we are looking for a new order of things, and not hoping either to patch up the old order ourselves, or that others will succeed in patching what the Lord has declared "shall pass away." And now in our text he refers to "these things." In **the eleventh verse** he points out that those who have such expectations should be separate and distinct from all other people in the world, saying, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" And then **in our text and in the verse preceding it**, he points out that at this particular time the Adversary will get advantage of certain ones, will beguile them, get them to wrest the Scriptures, and thus to deceive themselves to their own destruction; ---to their loss of present light at least.

It would be past comprehension that such a class as the Apostle has just described should be in great danger of falling into such errors of the wicked as blasphemy, or murder, or arson, or theft. We must look the matter up more carefully, and see whether or not the translators have given us a faithful rendering of the Apostle's words. We find that they have not, and that the word **wicked** is too strong: the Greek word is **athemos**; according to Prof. Young's Analytical Concordance (undisputed authority) it signifies "**unsettled**," or "**lawless**." Now, the passage seems more reasonable. There is danger, we can readily see, that those once established in the truth might be so led away as to become unsettled, and to wrest the Scriptures, "handle the word of God deceitfully," and thus become lawless in the sense that they would set aside the Word or Law of God, and take instead thereof a twisted interpretation which would the better suit some theory of their own. Such a wrong course the Apostle points out would surely **unsettle** them, and eventually mean the destruction of their spiritual interests; and that they would go into "outer darkness" in respect to "present truth." "Beware, lest **ye also**, being led away with the error of the **unsettled**, fall from your own steadfastness."

The Apostle's language not only points to the present time, but seems to imply that there would be previous fallings away or siftings, which he calls "the error of the wicked" ---literally, "the delusions of the unsettled or lawless." The implication seems to be, that

the not settled ones would first be shaken out, and that subsequently there would come a still more insidious trial which would test even the "steadfast." We inquire therefore, have there been, during this "harvest" time (whilst we are waiting for the dissolution of the present order of things and for the establishment of the new order of things) – have there been such siftings or fallings away by delusions which have affected those not settled? We answer: Yes, there have been several.

(While the "siftings" specially affect those who have been brought by the Lord into the light of present truth, yet in a more general way and along different lines slightly different siftings are in progress with the nominal church as a whole. Each denomination is being shaken, and the theories of Evolution, Spiritism, Christian Science, Theosophy and Moralism are making great inroads upon all who have named the name of Christ, even if they have not come into the light of the "harvest" truth. Unsettled, lacking the knowledge of the divine Word and plan, **necessary in this evil day**, the whole nominal church is gradually losing its faith in the Bible, under the lead of its most able ministers, who, blinded to present truth, and unable to rightly divide the Word of truth, are generally coming to hold the opinion, that their own ideas respecting truth ("higher criticism") are superior to the Scripture presentations.)

The Apostle in our text cautions that we beware against being "**led away**." The word here rendered "led away" occurs in only one other place in the Scriptures (Gal. 2:13), where the Apostle Paul says, "Barnabas also was **carried away** with their dissimulation." The words "**carried away**" give the same thought as "led away" but a little more strongly: they imply that the danger to the steadfast will be along some line which would **sweep away** or **carry away** their judgments from the fixed statements of the divine Word, through personal preference, or sympathy, or through the influence of some one held in respect or esteem. Let us all therefore be on guard, that whoever may, consciously or unconsciously, become the instrument of the Adversary, and seek to lead us away from the sure testimonies of the Lord's Word (whether congenial to our natural tastes or uncongenial), we may **not be** "**carried away**" but that we may be more determined than ever that—

To our Lord we will be true
Who bought us with his blood.
Only Jesus will we know,
And Jesus crucified.

Let us not forget that there is a way, and one way only, whereby we may *insure* ourselves against falling into any of these traps of the Adversary. This insurance is not secured wholly by knowledge, although knowledge is a very important element in it: it is secured chiefly by obedience to the principles laid down in the Lord's Word, and illustrated in the life and character of our Lord and his apostles. The same Apostle who addresses us this caution against falling from our own steadfastness, tells us in the same epistle (1:5-12), "If ye *do these things*, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." R. 2218

3:17-18 Peter felt the force of Paul's wise and earnest counsel, and with emphasis re-echoed the same sentiments. To give heed to such seducing doctrines, contrary to the doctrine which we have already received from the Lord and the apostles, argues a lack of faith in those doctrines. Such a one is not **established** in the faith. And indeed there are those—and such is the general sentiment among the teachers of false doctrine—who think that it is not either necessary or advisable to be established in the faith.

With these sentiments of "our beloved brother Paul," Peter's counsel is in fullest harmony, his advice being, not to waste valuable time in investigating "the errors of the wicked;" but, on the contrary, to endeavor the more earnestly to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ," who is the way, the truth and the life. The more thorough our knowledge of the Lord and the more intimate our acquaintance with him, the more secure we are in our own steadfastness. R. 3215

3:18 But what is it to grow in grace? It is to grow in favor with the Lord through an intimate personal acquaintance and fellowship of spirit with him. It implies, first, a knowledge and recognition on our part of our redemption through his precious blood and a personal faith in and dependence upon all the promises of the Father made to us through him, and then an intimate communion with him in our daily life of prayer, and of observation of his will and obedience to it. If such be our constant attitude of mind and heart, there must be a constant ripening of the fruits of the spirit, rendering us more and more pleasing and acceptable to our Lord. A sense of the divine acceptance and favor is given to us from day to day in increasing measure, in fulfilment of that blessed promise of our Lord, "If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." —John 14:23. This, as nearly as words can express it, is what it is to grow in grace; but the full and blessed understanding of it is best appreciated by those who from day to day walk with God in faith and obedience and love.

To grow thus in grace and not grow in knowledge is impossible; for the very object of such communion is to build us up in a more perfect knowledge and acquaintance with the Lord—to bring us into closer fellowship with the divine plan, and to give us the privilege of being "workers together with him" in executing that plan. If, therefore, we love and obey the Lord and desire to grow in his favor, his written Word is our daily meditation and study; and thus we grow in knowledge. But even to those thus established in the faith there is abundant opportunity to grow in knowledge; for while they will see nothing new or different in outline or design, they will be continually charmed and cheered with newly discovered lines of harmony and beauty in the divine drawings of the wonderful plan of the ages. As pupils we may ever study the master workmanship of the Divine Architect.

If we have the witness of the Spirit of growth, both in grace and in knowledge, let us rejoice therein, and let us follow on in the same pathway until it shall bring us, under divine guidance, to that which is perfect, both in knowledge and in grace. R. 3215, E239



Epilogue

Those who are still sober and faithful, and who have not cast away their confidence, have been led into the secret of the Master's presence; and they have been made to sit down to meat, and the Master himself has come forth and served them. Yes, our hearts have been made to burn within us while he has opened up the Scriptures and made us understand, from the testimony of the law and the prophets and the apostles, that the time is fulfilled---that the end of the age is now here, and that the Lord of the harvest is present to direct and supervise the great work of reaping the fruit of precious seed long ago sown in tears, and now to be gathered with joy and singing; while he has opened up to us the treasures of divine wisdom and grace displayed in the plan of the ages, which God purposed before the foundation of the world, which he has been gradually working out in the ages past, and which is now nearing its glorious consummation.

Oh, what feasting, what rejoicing there has been around the table of the Lord, as one after another the treasures of divine grace have been opened to us, revealing the glories of the new heavens and the new earth, and the blessedness of all the obedient subjects of him who sitteth on the throne to reign in righteousness; how all tears shall be wiped from off all faces, and how the reproach of God's people is to be taken away! Well indeed did Daniel prophesy, saying, "Oh, the blessedness of him that waiteth and cometh to the thousand, three hundred, thirty and five days!" ---the days of the Lord's second presence, when all that is written to be accomplished by his glorious reign shall begin to come to pass.

The long foretold Time of Trouble, such as never was and never will be again (Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21,22), has begun. Daily the heat of human passion is growing more intense. In view of this approaching dissolution, now at the very door, what should be our attitude of heart? What should be the course of those who are prospective citizens of the great Government about to be established, which will control the affairs of earth under the headship of Christ Jesus, earth's rightful King? We should remember that in order to become of the Kingdom class which is to have the rulership of earth for a thousand years, we must be separate from the aims, ambitions and policy of the present order. One of the essentials is that we recognize the vast difference between the present order of things and the New Order now at hand, and that we take our stand accordingly. In the meantime, we should do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to the Household of Faith, our brethren in Christ.

As loyal children of the Great King of the Universe, who is now about to inaugurate His Kingdom in the hands of His Son, we pray, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in Heaven." We rejoice in the evidences which we see all about us that our prayers for this Kingdom are now to be answered. Meantime we must live in harmony with this prayer. As St. Peter reminds us,

What manner of persons ought we to be,

in all holiness of life, in separateness from the world! The Apostle puts this solemn question right home to us. It is applicable now as never before.

Let us lay these precious words to heart; for we stand in the very presence of the Great Judge of all the earth. These exhortations and encouragements, which were primarily addressed to the Church who lived over eighteen hundred years ago, and which have served a purpose of good all along down this Gospel Age, are especially meant by the Spirit for those of the Church who are living in this very Day of God. How favored are these above all the people of the world and above the masses of professed followers of Christ, who have not this knowledge!

Being purified by this hope, ought we not, as the Apostle exhorts, to fashion ourselves, not according to the former lusts (desires and ambitions, which we had) in our ignorance, but as he who has called us is holy, should not we also be holy in all manner of conversation---in all our words and ways? Since it is written, "Be ye holy; for I [the Lord] am holy (1 Pet. 1:15,16), should not we who are called to be partakers of his own nature and glory be holy also? R. 3149, R. 5864, R. 3150

Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things,
be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and
blameless. Grow in the grace and knowledge of
our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To Him be the glory both now and forever.

Amen.

2 Peter 3:14,18



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D – Volume 4 Studies in the Scriptures: *The Battle of Armaggeddon*
E – Volume 5 Studies in the Scriptures: *The At-One-Ment Between God and Man*
F – Volume 6 Studies in the Scriptures: *The New Creation*

CR – *Convention Reports Sermons*
HG – *Harvest Gleanings*
HGL – *Harvest Gleanings III*
NS – *Harvest Gleanings II (Newspaper Sermons)*
OV – *Overland Monthly*
PD – *Photodrama of Creation*
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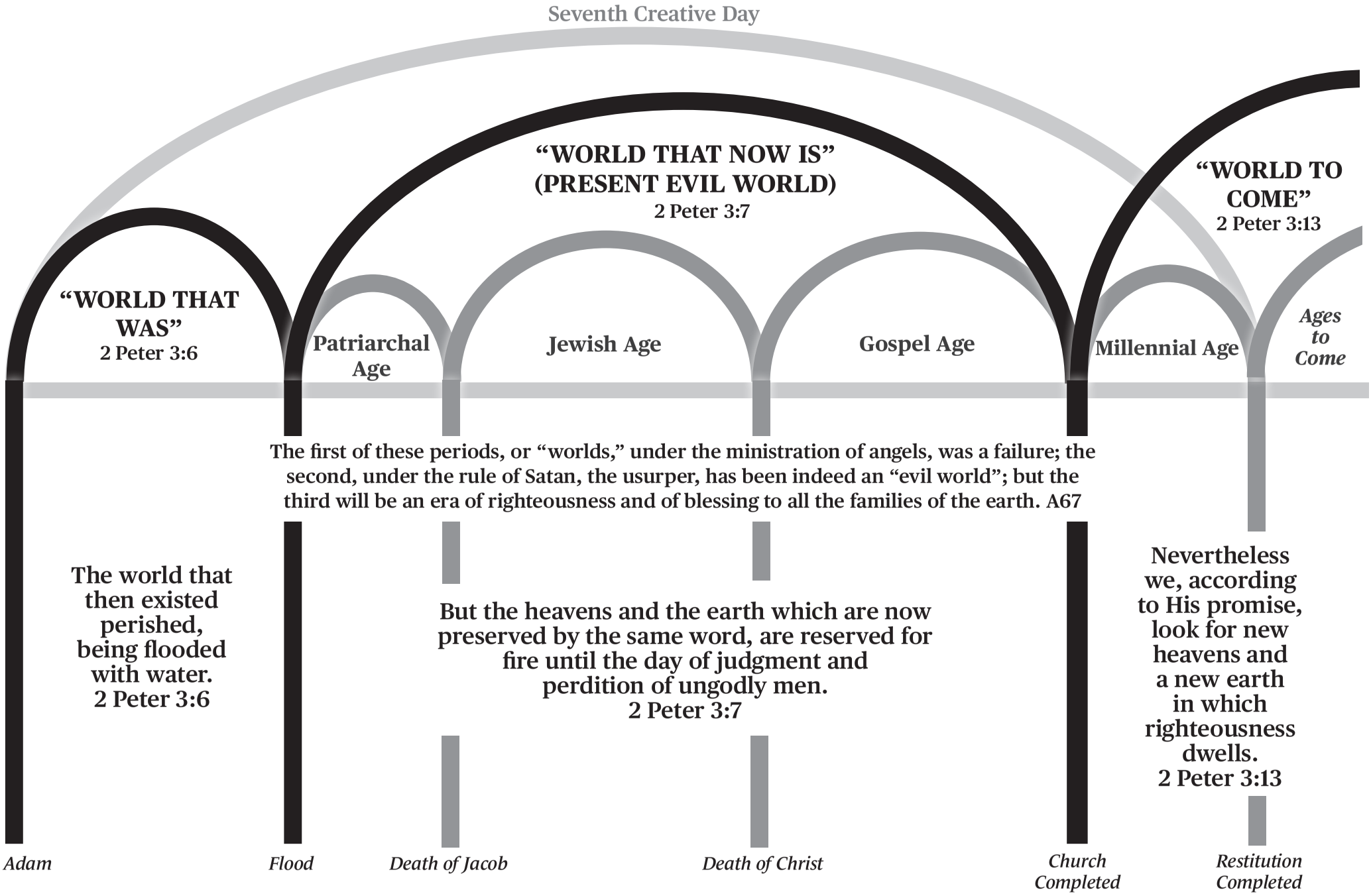
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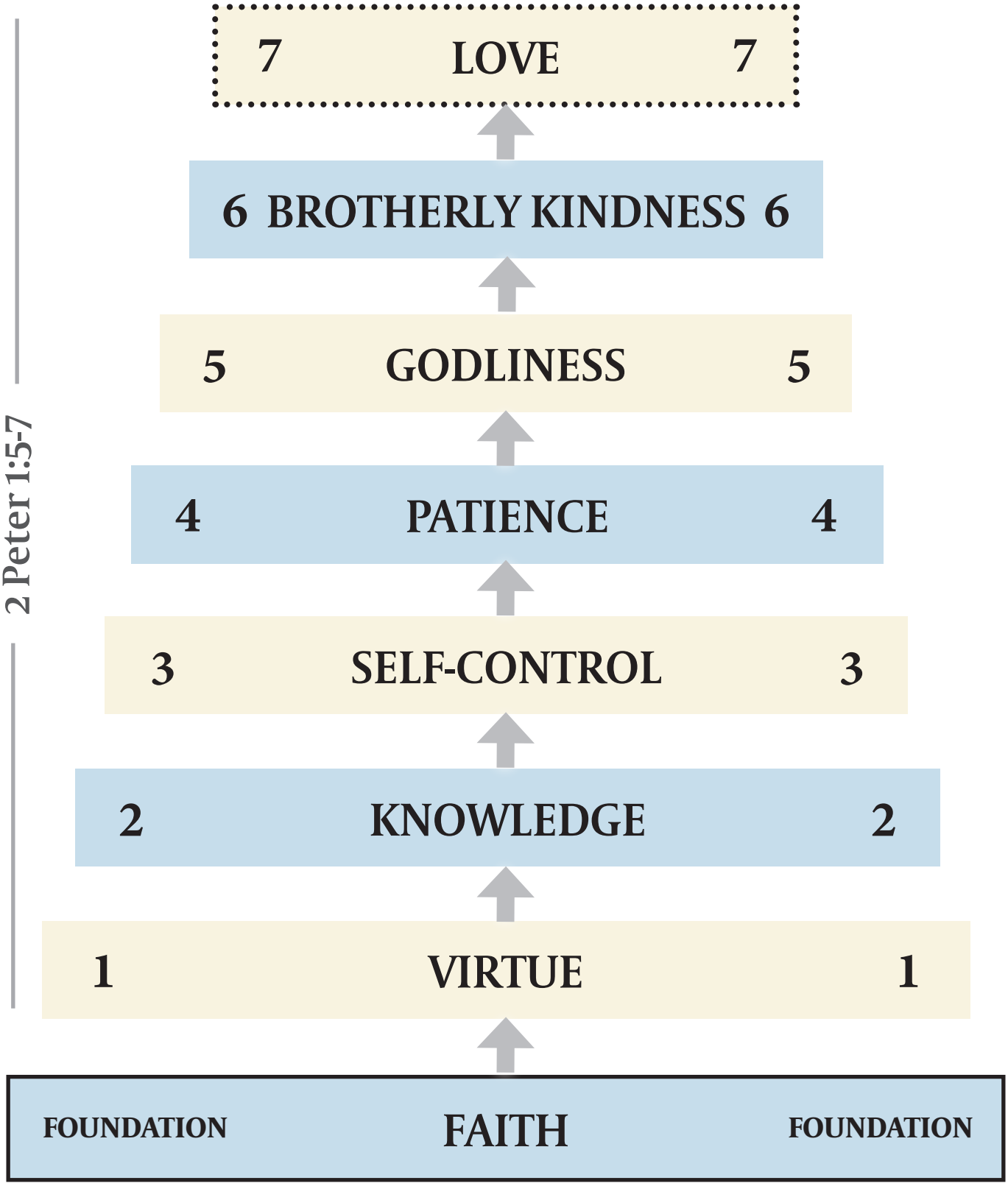
Appendix

The Three "Worlds" from 2 Peter Chapter 3



ADD TO YOUR FAITH

If these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2 Peter 1:8



Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.
– 2 Peter 1:5-7 –

FAITH

It is important to observe here that while all of these virtues are imperative requirements of those who would be esteemed of God as faithful, they are only of value as they are added to, or built upon, a **foundation of faith**–– "Giving all diligence **add to your faith**," ––your "precious faith," as described in verse 1. This faith is our abiding confidence in the divine plan of salvation, which centers in the redemption accomplished through the precious blood of Christ, who freely gave himself a ransom for all. No righteousness of our own without this foundation of faith can avail anything to commend us to God. All our works of righteousness must be built upon this faith.

Having this foundation, then, and "having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" ––through the desires of the flesh––and having by faith laid hold also on the "exceeding great and precious promises" of being made partakers of the divine nature and joint-heirs with Christ of his Kingdom and glory, and being anxious to make our "calling and election sure," let us consider these **additions** to our faith, which, if possessed and continuously cultivated, are the assurance that we shall never fall, and that an abundant entrance into the Kingdom shall be granted to us.

VIRTUE

The first addition **(virtue)** is **fortitude** or strength of character in righteousness. This implies the cultivation of the strictest integrity in our dealings, both with God and with our fellow men, ––scrupulous honesty, justice and truth being the only standard. The Psalmist clearly defines it thus, saying, "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth i**n his heart**. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor; in whose eyes a vile person is condemned; but he honoreth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not [i.e., who will not violate a contract found to be unfavorable to him]. He that putteth not out his money to usury [taking unjust advantage of the necessities of others], nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved." (Psa. 15.) Such a one is a virtuous man, a man of fortified or strong character.

KNOWLEDGE

The second addition is **knowledge**––the knowledge of God and of his righteous will concerning us (revealed through his Word, by the holy spirit). Neglect of this divinely appointed means of knowledge is equivalent to setting up our own imperfect standard of righteousness and ignoring the divine standard. It is therefore important that we give all diligence to the study of the divine oracles that we may be fortified in faith and works accordingly.

SELF-CONTROL

The third addition, **self-control**, is one of the most important elements of good character. He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city, is the counsel of the wise man; and many a victorious general has yet to learn to conquer and control himself. Self-control has to do with all our sentiments, thoughts, tastes, appetites, labors, pleasures, sorrows and hopes. Its cultivation, therefore, means a high order of character-development. Self-control, accompanied by faith, fortitude, knowledge from on high, implies increased zeal and activity in divine things and increased moderation in earthly things, in judgment, in conduct, in the regulation of temporal affairs, etc. "Let your moderation be known unto all men."

PATIENCE

The fourth addition is **patience**. Time is a very necessary element in the process of perfecting every good thing. The fruit hastily plucked is the unripe, hard, sour, bitter fruit. Time, as well as pruning and fertilizing and cultivating and shower and sunshine, is necessary to the ripe and luscious fruitage that delights the taste. So it is also with the fruitage of plans and purposes, of education and of grace. God's deep designs work out slowly, not only in his great universal government, but also in the hearts and minds of his intelligent creatures. God is operating all things according to his own will along the lines of the fixed principles of his wise and righteous laws —-physical, moral and intellectual. To be impatient in any case is foolishly to insist upon having the unripe, hasty, sour, bitter fruitage, which, if the Lord grant it, will prove a sickening penalty for the impatience that demanded it. "Let patience have her perfect work," wait God's time: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." Wait the Lord's time and way and the indications of his will in every case, both with regard to ourselves and others and "they that put their trust in him shall never be confounded."

It is noticeable that the Lord seems to forewarn his people of great need of patience in the "harvest" or end of this age: patience toward fellow men and patience, in the warfare against evil, and in waiting for the Lord's time and method of setting right the wrongs of "the present evil world." The poor world, lacking faith, fortitude, knowledge of the divine plan and patience will fall a ready prey to unrest and anarchy in the near future. The Word of the Lord to his people is, —- "**Ye** have need of patience."

GODLINESS

The fifth addition is **godliness**, godlikeness, piety, —-that devout, controlling reverence for God which yields a hearty, cheerful, loving conformity to his will—- fervency of spirit in serving the Lord. This is a later development and vital element in the Christian character. Piety, godliness, springs spontaneously from appreciative and grateful hearts, whose delight is in the law of the Lord, in meditation upon his precepts and promises, and in secret communion with God in prayer and praise. Loving, cheerful activity must result from such an inner life; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and the whole being is quickened to new life.

Only those who have a living faith in God, and who are fortifying their characters against evil and growing in knowledge and self-control and patience are prepared to appreciate the grandeur of the divine character; and only such are really energized by a desire for God-likeness.

BROTHERLY KINDNESS

The sixth addition is **brotherly kindness**, which of necessity grows out of godliness. As God-like-ness presupposes the other graces mentioned, so its development implies an appreciation of divine justice and beneficence, and will broaden and deepen our sentiments toward all the well-disposed, however imperfect, and especially will it enlarge our hearts to all who are of the household of faith—– "the brethren."

LOVE

The seventh addition is charity, **love**, —–the bond of perfectness which unites all the other graces, and as a name stands for them all.

Love to God alone is not the full manifestation of this grace; nor can there be, according to the teachings of God's Word, a sincere love for God, without a corresponding love to man: "If a man say, I love God," says the Apostle John, "and hateth his brother, **he is a liar**, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20.) And Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, **if ye have love one to another**." —–John 13:35.

It is the abounding of these graces of character added to our faith in Christ as our Redeemer and Savior that insures the soul against the possibility of falling: "If ye do these things, **ye shall never fall**." The contingency is not in the doing of these things **perfectly**, and regardless of the righteousness of Christ to cover our transgressions and compensate for our daily shortcomings; but if, **added to** our faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ, we have cultivated all these graces **to the extent of our ability**, we shall not fall. When we have done all that we can do, we are still unprofitable servants, not daring to trust in our own righteousness, but in the ample robe which is ours by faith in Christ, while, with consistent "diligence," we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that the righteousness of Christ is only applied to such as desire to forsake sin and to pursue that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." —–Heb. 12:14. R. 2154

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble, for so an entrance will be supplied to you *abundantly* into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
2 Peter 1:10-11