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STUDIES

IN THE

SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

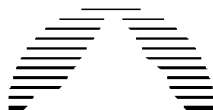
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Studies in the Scriptures appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow in their influence upon God's people around the world, through their clarity, careful exposition, and Christ-centeredness.

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DISPENSATIONALISM

Occasionally, a brief reference is made in these pages to the crudities and absurdities of what is termed, "Dispensationalism," for some of our readers have been influenced by its evil teaching, and it becomes duty to seek to remove this stumbling-stone from their path. Others of our friends, though unacquainted with this erroneous system, need to be warned against the same. The movement was born a century ago, and has been proudly advertised and extensively propagated under the guise of "new light on God's Word"—an opening up of "the deeper things of God." It is a system of *interpreting the Scriptures*: an unwarrantable method of segregating its contents, which, if adopted, *robs* God's people of much of His Word. Not content with rightly distinguishing between what pertained unto those under the old and new covenants, and between what is spoken to the "saints" and to "the children of disobedience" (Eph 5:6), Old and New Testament alike are broken up into sections and labeled "for the Jew," "for the Gentiles," "for the church of God," and most of it "NOT to *us*." These modern Jehoikims (Jer 36:23, 28) sever one passage from another, as they are arbitrarily alleged to belong to different dispensations or eras—both in the past and in the future.

Though posing as men of exceptional insight, as "profound Bible teachers," the Dispensationalists are far from being agreed among themselves as to how many separate eras are treated of in Scripture, or at what precise point one ends and another begins. Some claim there are but seven; others, twelve; while a few make them to be fourteen. The popular Scofield Bible teaches there are no fewer than four covered by the book of Genesis alone, and that a fifth starts in Exodus 19, under which God dealt with men on entirely different lines. Dr. Scofield says: "A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God." The first he styles, "The Dispensation of Innocency," which "ended in the judgment of the Expulsion (Gen 3:24)." The second, "Conscience," which "ended in the judgment of the Flood." The third, "Human Government," and "the judgment of the confusion of tongues ended the *racial* testing." The fourth, "Promise," which "ended when Israel rashly accepted the Law." The fifth, "Law," which "extends from Sinai to Calvary."

Now the Greek word, *oikonomia*, meaning "house arrangement," occurs seven times in the New Testament. The first three [occur] in Luke 16:2-4, where it is rendered "stewardship," which connotes something radically different from an *era*! In no instance does the *time element* enter into the signification of the word! In 1 Corinthians 9:17, Paul declared "a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me": how utterly absurd would it be to conclude that an "age" had been entrusted to him!—rather was it an evangelical stewardship or economy. "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is *given me* to you-ward" (Eph 3:2), "whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is *given to me* for you, to fulfil the word of God" (Col 1:25). In neither of those verses is there the remotest reference to a section of history, but rather to an evangelical administration. As the business of a steward is to serve and distribute, so the apostle was called to *dispense* the Gospel to the Gentiles, to communicate to others what God had revealed to him. In Ephesians 1:10—the only other reference—the simple meaning is that God's plan or economy of salvation is to concentrate all in Christ, all the redeemed being united to one Head. Thus, the Scriptural usage of the word, "dispensation" signifies *not* an age or era, *but* a stewardship or administration of things received by commission.

What Scriptural authority, it may be asked, do the Dispensationalists have for their startling method of exegesis?—one quite unknown to the Reformers and godly Puritans! To what passages do they point as warrant for their emphatic assertion that the greater part of the Bible pertains not to those living in this Christian era?—wrongly denominated by them as "the Dispensation of Grace." Wrongly, we say, for as a distinguishing title, it is utterly misleading, seeing that God dealt in pure grace with all He chose in Christ, from the time of Abel until the day of Pentecost: *see* Genesis 6:8; Exodus 33:12; Jeremiah 31:2; Psalm 84:11; Proverbs 3:34; Nehemiah 9:31; and Jonah 4:2. Surely some very plain and emphatic "thus saith the LORD" is required by believers today when they are dogmatically informed that the whole of the Old Testament and much in the New has no direct reference to them. But no such divine authorization is forthcoming: nothing but an appeal to the *sound* of one verse, and a human *guess* upon another!

The first passage to which they have recourse is, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, *rightly dividing* the word of truth" (2Ti 2:15)—which they affirm to mean partitioning one part to this dispensation and another to that. Let it be duly noted that this verse is not

an exhortation to God's people at large, telling them how to handle His Word; but, instead, part of the instructions given to a minister of the Gospel; nor is there any intimation in the context that the Spirit was about to enunciate a revolutionizing principle for interpreting the Scriptures. If this verse be compared with Matthew 7:6; John 16:12; 1 Corinthians 3:2, etc., its meaning is clear. The occupant of the pulpit is to give diligence in becoming equipped to give his hearers "their *portion* of meat in due season" (Luk 12:42). For him to rightly divide the word (2Ti 2:15) is to minister it *suitably* to the cases and circumstances of his congregation—to sinners and saints, the indifferent and inquiring, babes and fathers, the tempted and afflicted, the backslider and the fallen.

The remaining passage is Luke 4:16-20, where in the synagogue of Nazareth, Christ read Isaiah 61:1, and for some reason or other stopped in the middle of verse 2. The unauthorized *guess* of the Dispensationists is that our Lord omitted the next words "and the day of vengeance of our God" (almost always ignoring the additional "to comfort all that mourn"!), because *that* pertained to a future and distant era. Scofield's Bible says, "Jesus stopped at 'the acceptable year of the LORD,' which is connected with the first advent and the dispensation of grace; 'the day of vengeance of our God' belongs to the second advent and judgment." Thus, we are asked to believe that Isaiah 61:2 treats of two totally different "dispensations," and that the word "and" in the middle of it covers a period which has already extended for more than nineteen centuries! Anything more bizarre and ridiculous could scarcely be imagined. *Facts refute it!* Did not Christ plainly proclaim "the day of the vengeance of our God" when He asserted, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell" (Mat 11:23)? when He pronounced "woe" after "woe" upon the scribes and Pharisees? When He declared to the Jewish nation, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Mat 23:38)? When He announced of the temple, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another" (Mat 24:2)? He *did* as certainly as He also comforted all that moment with a godly sorrow.

On those two verses (2Ti 2:15; Isa 61:2) has been based an entire system of interpreting the Scriptures, which is claimed to be essential to their right understanding and apportioning. *That is all* the support which this fanciful theory has! Never was so imposing a structure erected upon so flimsy a foundation. Never were credulous simpletons so easily beguiled as when they believed the *ipsi dixit*¹ of these exegetical thieves, and suffered themselves to be deprived of much of God's Word by accrediting their assertions that much in the Prophets is "Millennial," that the Sermon on the Mount belongs to "the Kingdom age," and that most of the Revelation treats only of "the Tribulation period." Cease ye from man! Receive the whole Bible as God's Word *to* you and *for* you.

As a sample of the pernicious teaching of the Scofield Bible on this subject, we cite a part of its note on John 1:18: "As a Dispensation, grace begins with the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom 3:24-26; 6:4-5). The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ," etc. It betrays the greatest ignorance to assert that sinners were saved in a different way under the Mosaic economy. Limiting ourselves to the Psalms, we there see that there was, then, *the same* conviction of guilt and demerit (Psa 32:3-5), the same inevitable condemnation on the ground of God's Law (Psa 143:2), the same earnest carrying for underserved mercy (Psa 51:1), faith in His revealed character as a just God and Saviour (Psa 25:8), hope of pardon, resting on propitiation (Psa 130:7), pleading of God's name or glory of all His perfections (Psa 25:11), joy and peace in believing (Psa 89:15-16), trust in God's faithfulness to His promises (Psa 89:1-2), confidence in the righteousness of Another (Psa 84:9), disowning of all ground for boasting (Psa 115:1) as there is now! Thus the *same Gospel* which was "preached...unto Abraham" (Gal 3:8) was proclaimed and believed in the days of David; and Jewish sinners were no more saved then by "legal obedience" than are Gentile sinners today. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine" (2Ti 3:16). Every part is needed by us: let none filch any from you.

¹ *ipsi dixit* – Latin, "he himself has said it"; any arbitrary or dogmatic statement.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

56. 2 Thessalonians 3:5, Part 4

Not only does love to God promote patience towards Him in a general way, but also specifically in connection with “waiting for Christ” (2Th 3:5). As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) pointed out, “They that love God level all their thoughts and desires to this: that God may be enjoyed, that God may be glorified.” It is the yearning of the new nature to delight itself in God to the fullest measure and manner of its capacity; and therefore, the language of a saint is, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God” (Psa 42:1). Yet how little is that longing realized in this life! How distant and how broken is our communion with Him! How much there is in our daily duties which prevents the direct occupation of the mind with His perfections! But it will not ever be thus. A full, immediate, uninterrupted, and eternal enjoyment of God in Christ is promised His people. But that will only be at Christ’s coming. “We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1Jo 3:2)—like Him both in holiness and in happiness. Then will He say unto each of His faithful servants, “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Mat 25:21, 23); and then “so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1Th 4:17).

They that truly love God not only long for an enjoyment of Him, but they also sincerely desire that He may be glorified. The honour of God’s name is valued high above that of their own. The publication of His Gospel, the coming of His kingdom, the vindication of His Truth, are what their hearts are most set upon. It is also the yearning of the new nature within which makes them strive to please Him. If the deepest aspiration of their hearts could be realized, never again would they do or say anything which brought the slightest reproach upon God’s cause, but rather “shew forth” His praise continually. But alas, how often is this aspiration thwarted by the activities of indwelling sin—how often they find that the good they would do is performed not, and the evil which they hate breaks forth (Rom 7:19). And how often are they made to mourn over the corruption of the Gospel and the dishonour done to God’s Truth! But it will not ever be thus. At the coming of Christ, their longings will be realized: the divine promises and threatenings will all be accomplished. “He shall come to be glorified in his saints” (1Th 1:10), and all His enemies will then be His footstool.

Where there is true love unto God, there will necessarily be the same unto *Christ*, His incarnate Son, the anointed One. “Christ” ever refers to Him in His official character as Prophet, Priest, and Pontentate. As God loves His people in Christ (Eph 1:3-5) and for His sake (Rom 8:39), so we love God in Christ. God can neither be known, approached, nor loved apart from the Mediator, the Son of His love. It is in and by Christ that God is fully declared (Joh 1:18; 2Co 4:6). They who imagine they love God, and yet at the same time regard Christ as being merely a creature—and rest not their eternal hope upon the sufficiency of His propitiatory sacrifice—are fatally deceived. Christ accounted for the hostility of the Jews towards Himself by saying, “Ye have not the love of God in you” (Joh 5:40, 42); and when they boasted that God was their Father, He told them, “If God were your Father, ye would love *me*” (Joh 8:41-42) and “He that hateth me hateth my Father also” (Joh 15:23). Those who love not the Lord Jesus Christ with all their heart and render not divine honours to Him are unregenerate and yet in their sins: “He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father” (Joh 5:23); “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father” (1Jo 2:23).

Christ, the Mediator, is the grand Object of His people’s affections. “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity” (Eph 6:24). He is, by way of eminence, *He* whom they love. In the Canticles, we find the Spouse speaking of Him as “my beloved,” while in the New Testament, it is predicated of all His redeemed, “Whom having not seen, *ye love*; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice [i.e. shall rejoice—see next verse and 1Pe 4:13] with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8). This is an essential element in the Christian character. When soul is quickened by the Holy Spirit and brought to understand and believe the Gospel, he perceives that in the Lord Jesus, there is everything that is desirable, that in Him centre all excellencies in their absolute perfection; and that the benefits He has obtained for him are inestimable in value, countless in number, and everlasting in duration. Contemplating His glory, “the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (Joh 1:14), he exclaims, He is “the chiefest among ten thousand...he is altogether lovely” (Song 5:10, 16). Reflecting on what He has done and suffered, what He has given and promised, he declares, “[I] love him, because he first loved [me]” (1Jo 4:19).

Now it is the very essence of love to seek union with its object, to be present with and have intimate intercourse with the same. So it is with the Christian in reference to the Object of his affections. Yet such longings can be but very imperfectly gratified in this life, for though faith in exercise makes Him real and precious to the soul, yet the believer sees Him through a glass darkly (1Co 13:12). The regenerated one looks forward to the time when he shall "see the king in his beauty" (Isa 33:17), see Him "face to face" (1Co 13:12). He knows that his joy will be immeasurably increased when he shall be bodily "present with the Lord" (2Co 5:8), when he shall hear His voice with his outward ear, knowing that "sweet is [His] voice, and [His] countenance is comely" (Song 2:14). Not only are believers now absent from their Beloved, but they are most imperfectly acquainted with Him. They know Him, and are following on to know Him better, counting "all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus [their] Lord" (Phi 3:8). Yet, despite their best efforts in the use of means, they know but "in part" (1Co 13:12) in reference to Him whom they love. It will be otherwise by and by.

The final state of the Christian will be very different from his present one. Here he encounters trials, numerous and painful; there, he shall enjoy the glorious and blessed effects of them (2Co 4:17). Now, complete salvation—deliverance from the very presence of sin both internally and externally, full conformity to the image of God's Son—is but the subject of hope; then it will be wholly realized. At present, Christ is apprehended from the Word by faith, imperfectly and fitfully; throughout the endless ages of eternity, Christ will be bodily present with His redeemed, and their knowledge of Him will be direct and immediate. Then shall the desire of His heart be accomplished: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (Joh 17:24). This is a season of heaviness (1Pe 1:6); that shall be one of unclouded bliss: "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psa 16:11). Here we follow after that we may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has apprehended us; then each shall exclaim, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psa 17:15).

Now this completion of the believer's salvation and consummation of his longings will be at the coming of Christ, which will be a personal and visible appearing of Himself: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Act 1:11). "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1Th 4:16-17). "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Mat 16:27). "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col 3:4). In His glorified body, Christ will for ever dwell in the midst of His people. His coming is also designated, "the *revelation* of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:13) unto His people, which imports a fuller manifestation of His excellencies unto them, when a clearer discovery will be made of His personal glory and mediatorial honours, and when they shall know Him far better and more extensively than they do now.

As faith lays hold of those precious promises, and as love fires the heart, the believer yearns for the fulfilment of them; and both stimulate hope and give strength to a patient waiting. Love craves Himself, and hope is fixed upon the realization. That expectation of hope and patient waiting is expressed in Scripture in three ways. Sometimes by *looking*: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Ti 2:13); "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb 9:28)—not as our Sinbearer, but as our Sinremover. Sometimes by *longing and loving*: "For in this [earthly house] we groan, earnestly *desiring* to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (2Co 5:2); "Them also that *love* his appearing" (2Ti 4:8). Sometimes by *waiting*: "Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 1:7); "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven" (1Th 1:9-10); "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Gal 5:5). The waiting is in expectation of that which is confidently hoped for; and the longing is strengthened by the deferring of immediate realization, assured that, "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb 10:37) beyond the ordained hour.

Nineteen centuries have passed since the Redeemer left this scene and took His place on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and scoffers still say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2Pe 3:4). Daily there arises from the hearts and lips of God's people the prayer, "Thy kingdom come" (Mat 6:10; Luk 11:2), and

as yet, it remains unanswered. Many have been wrongly taught to base their expectation of the nearness of Christ's return upon the conditions obtaining in this world, and which are adduced as the fulfilment of prophecy—to the repeated disappointment of such an expectation. God's people are to walk by *faith* and not by sight: "signs" are "not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (1Co 14:22)! Our Lord plainly declared, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (Mat 12:39; 16:4). "As Rebecca spied Isaac in the distance, so faith looks upon Christ as if He had begun His journey and were now upon the way, and makes the believer stand ready to meet and welcome Him. Though it come not to pass presently, the thing is promised, and the time certainly determined in God's decree, which is enough for faith"—T. Manton.

Why has the Bridegroom "tarried" (Mat 25:5)? Because the ordained hour of His return has not yet arrived. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any [of them] should perish, but that all [of His "beloved" (2Pe 3:1)] should come to repentance" (2Pe 3:9)—the full number of His elect must be gathered in before Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Christ is now building the spiritual temple of the Lord (Zec 6:13; Eph 2:21-22), adding stone unto stone (1Pe 2:5); and not until it is complete will He come and "bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it" (Zec 4:7). Meanwhile, the word to His people is, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman *waiteth* for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (Jam 5:7-8): *not* "has drawn nigh," as men say, but "draweth nigh"—is ever getting nearer.

The similitude of the husbandman patiently waiting for the fruits of his labours is a very apt and suggestive one. He sows his grain in faith, believing that in due course, his toil will be rewarded. He waits in hope, expecting the harvest at the appointed season. The fruit does not immediately appear: he waits for weeks and sees nothing, and for months before his crop can be garnered. But he *will* have a harvest, for God has promised the same (Gen 8:22), and then will his hope be realized. So it is with the Christian: "Light is *sown* for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psa 97:11); and when Christ appears to reward His people, the joy of harvest shall be theirs. How long did the Old Testament saints have to wait for the first advent of Christ! Yet by faith, Abraham saw it "and was glad" (Joh 8:56). Even if there should be twenty thousand years before Christ's second advent, what is that span of time in comparison with the endless ages of eternity! If our hearts be truly set upon His appearing, then love will reduce the distance between our hope and its realization, and enable us to "wait patiently" (Psa 37:7) for Him.

The attentive reader will observe that as an alternative to "patient waiting for Christ" (2Th 3:5), the margin gives "the patience of Christ." The Greek may be rendered both ways with equal propriety. Taking it as "the patience of Christ," the genitive case is virtually a descriptive adjective (as in "patience of hope," 1Th 1:3), and thus signifies *Christlike patience*. In its full meaning, it is that patience which Christ requires and inculcated, which He personally exemplified and is still exercising, and of which He is the Author and Perfecter. During His earthly ministry, Christ enjoined upon His disciples a *working* patience: "Son, go work to day in my vineyard" (Mat 21:28). "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luk 9:62). He exhorted them unto a suffering or *enduring* patience: "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luk 21:19); "He that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Mat 10:22). He called them to a *waiting* patience: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord" (Luk 12:35-36); "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Mat 24:42).

Christ not only inculcated that threefold exercise of patience, but He also personally *exemplified* the same. Consider His patience in *well doing*. At the age of twelve, He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luk 2:49). Throughout His public ministry, though constantly opposed, He ever went about doing good. At night time, He declined not to see Nicodemus (Joh 3:1-21), and though "wearied with his journey" (Joh 4:6), nevertheless, He ministered in grace to the Samaritan adulteress (Joh 4:7-26). "And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself" (Mar 3:20-21). Said He, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (Joh 9:4). With unflagging diligence and unwearied patience, He continued until, at the close, He could say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (Joh 17:4).

Consider Christ's *patience under suffering*: in enduring such contradiction of sinners against Himself. "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not" (1Pe 2:23). How patiently He bore with the dullness of His apostles! Many a master would have grown weary with such pupils, but in infinite love, He continued still to teach them, though they were so slow to learn. How tenderly and longsufferingly did He deal with their unbelief! When they petulantly asked, "Carest thou not that we perish?" (Mar 4:38), He said, "Why are ye so fearful?" (Mar 4:40). When they were skeptical of His feeding the multitude, He upbraided them not (Jam 1:5). How meekly He submitted to the dispensations of God: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (Joh 18:11). Though He was complete in all graces and perfect in all active obedience, the glory of His perfections is put upon His patience under suffering: the Captain of our salvation was made "perfect through sufferings" (Heb 2:10). That unrepining endurance of afflictions was what enhanced and exalted His obedience: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb 5:8).

Consider Christ's *waiting* patience. When His brethren according to the flesh bade Him go into Judea that His disciples there might witness His miracles, saying, "For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, *shew thyself* to the world" (Joh 7:3-4). He replied, "My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready" (Joh 7:6). Not then would He vindicate Himself by an open display of His glory. The appointed Day when He would appear before the world in visible majesty and power was not then. It is written, "He that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa 28:16); and Christ rendered perfect obedience to that precept, as to every other. He was never in a hurry. When the sisters of Lazarus sent word saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick" (Joh 11:3), instead of rushing at once to Bethany, "he abode two days still in the same place where he was" (Joh 11:6). It was not through any lack of compassion for those tried sisters, but because the right moment for Him to act and "shew himself strong" (2Ch 16:9) in their behalf had not arrived. He sought "the glory of God" (Joh 11:4), and therefore, waited *His* time.

With perfect composure and confident expectation, He looked for a happy issue from His sufferings: "My flesh also shall rest *in hope*. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou *wilt* shew me the path of life" (Psa 16:9-11). What is perhaps yet more remarkable, the Lord Jesus is even now exercising a waiting patience. That little-understood expression, "the kingdom and *patience* of [the ascended] Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9) is explained by "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth *expecting* till his enemies be made his footstool" (Heb 10:12-13). The suffering Saviour has been invested with unlimited dominion, and nothing now remains but the accomplishment of those effects which His sacrifice was designed to procure—namely, the saving of His elect and the subjugation of all revolvers against God. Christ is now calmly waiting the fulfilment of His Father's promise: that Day which God has "appointed" (Act 17:31). Here too He sets us an example.

"And the Lord direct your hearts [and mine too] into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2Th 3:5)—such patience as He Himself inculcated and exemplified, and which He alone can bestow upon and perfect in us.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

36. Jericho, Part 6

“And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times” (Jos 6:15). Israel was now put to a more exacting test than hitherto: once a day, they had marched around Jericho for six consecutive days, but on the seventh, they must do so no less than seven times. That illustrates a principle in the ways of God. In His dealings with His people, the Lord develops their graces by submitting them to a variety of trials, which are harder and harder to bear. Was it not thus with “the father of all them that believe” (Rom 4:11)? First, Abraham was called upon to leave his native land, and go forth not knowing whither. Then, after receiving promise from God of a son, his wife for many years remained barren. Finally, when the son was given and grown, the patriarch was bidden to offer him for a burnt offering. Do not expect your path to become easier, but rather that trials will be more severe. Why so?—that the sufficiency of God’s grace may be known.

Seek to visualize the course followed by Israel on this occasion: project yourself in spirit among them, remember they were “men of like passions” with you (Act 14:15). For six days, they had apparently made fools of themselves before the eyes of the Canaanites, and they did so uncomplainingly. Six times more they repeated the process, yet without any divine intervention or the slightest outward sign of success! The powerful walls of Jericho stood as firm as ever! What was the use of making still another journey around them when twelve had produced no tangible results? But they made no demur, nor declined such a seemingly senseless waste of time and energy. Instead, they carried out their orders. That is the most remarkable example of united obedience recorded in the Scriptures—emphasized here by the Spirit’s telling us twice in this verse that “they compassed the city seven times.” Admire then the grace of God which wrought so gloriously in and through them. He it was who subdued their corruptions and made them willing in the day of His power. Though trials increase in severity, so increased grace is given to bear them!

Here, as ever in Scripture, we should discern a blessed conjunction of the divine and the human, and the latter concurring with the former. God wrought secretly by imparting to them the inclination and the impulse; they exercising the same by obedient action. Though a much more severe test was made of them on this seventh day, it is expressly recorded that “they rose early about the dawning of the day.” *That* is the spirit in which to approach our tasks and perform our duties: with earnestness and enthusiasm, and not reluctantly and tardily. The more unpleasant the task, the sooner should it be tackled and disposed of. The harder be the duty, the more energetically should it be discharged: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might” (Ecc 9:10). This is not the time for the Christian to take his ease: he must “labour” before he enters into his rest (Heb 4:11). He is not called to picnic, but to “fight the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12)—and that implies strong opposition, and calls for the putting forth of all that is within us, if victory is to be ours.

“And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city” (Jos 6:16). Note well *when* that promise was made to Israel. Not until they had fully discharged their duty, not until their obedience and patience had been severely tested, only after they had completed twelve circuits of the city—were they assured that God would deliver it into their hands. Does not that fact suggest that we make too much of the promises, or rather, too little of the precepts to which they are attached? There has been a deplorable lack of balance at this point on the part of many preachers and writers. Comforting passages have been taken from their setting, and promises severed from the conditions by which they are qualified. The consoling of saints, rather than the honouring of God, is too often the aim of the pulpit. The manifestation of “good works” (Mat 5:16) and the bearing of “much fruit” (Joh 15:8) in our lives are what most glorifies the Father.

“And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout.” Previously, they had been enjoined to preserve strict silence (Jos 6:10). They were not to shout at their own caprice or pleasure, but only as and when their leader bade them—they must be completely subservient to *his* orders. Now the time had come for them to give one loud concerted shout. Why so?—to indicate the victory was secured. But this latter command was a harder one than the former. The injunction to maintain a decorous silence was but a test of their morale; but this order for them to give a grand and general shout made a very real demand upon their faith and obedience, for it was to be made

while the fortress still stood intact before them! Easy enough to shout *after* the victory, but this was to be given in assured anticipation of the same. It was faith's shout of conquest. It had been prophetically announced by Balaam, when he was moved to say of Israel, "The LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them" (Num 23:21).

"And the city shall be accursed ["devoted"—margin], even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent" (Jos 6:17). This brings before us the dark side of the picture: with the sole exception of Rahab and her family, all within Jericho were doomed. They were accursed, being idolaters and flagrantly wicked. As such, they were "devoted to the LORD"—that is, set apart unto destruction, to the praise of the glory of His justice. "The LORD hath made all things *for himself*: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Pro 16:4). True, God hath made difference between them according to His purpose of election; yet, whether this one was "chosen...to salvation" (2Th 2:13), or that one was "before of old ordained to this condemnation" (Jude :4), both alike were created for the divine glory. In the former, God makes manifest the richest of His mercy; in the latter, He displays the purity of His holiness and the verity of His righteousness. God's burning hatred against sin and His power to execute vengeance on all accursed to Him were solemnly demonstrated here at Jericho.

"And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD" (Jos 6:18-19). Their being forbidden to enrich themselves by any of the spoils of war was a further testing of Israel's obedience. Thereby, they were taught not to set their hearts upon worldly wealth, nor heap up an abundance of it for themselves. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pointed out, "God had promised them a land flowing with milk and honey, not a land abounding with silver and gold, for He would have them live comfortably in it that they might serve Him cheerfully, but not covet either to trade with distance countries, or to hoard for after time." There was a special reason for this prohibition being laid upon Israel here (for we do not find it repeated subsequently)—namely, that Jericho was the *first fruits* of Canaan; and therefore, it was most fitting that it should be entirely devoted unto the Lord, and its treasures consecrated unto Him.

It is to be duly noted that Joshua was not acting on his own initiative, nor was he prompted by his own understanding when he prescribed the possessions of the Canaanites, for Moses had given express orders: "The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the LORD thy God. Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it" (Deu 7:25-26). There we see once again how Joshua was in all things, like his Antitype, regulated by divine Law. Let us also point out how that this prohibition supplied yet another line in the typical picture which the capture of Jericho presents to us: when success attends the efforts of Christ's servants, they must be particularly on their guard against taking any credit unto themselves—all the glory must be ascribed to God alone!

"So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city" (Jos 6:20). Here was the grand reward of Israel's courage, obedience, and patience. Looking at it from one viewpoint, it must be said that the walls of Jericho fell down by the alone act of *God*, for no human hand or power contributed to it in the least. Yet from another viewpoint, the miracle may be justly attributed unto Israel: "By *faith* the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days" (Heb 11:30). From yet another angle, it is equally permissible and correct to say that Jericho fell in response to their implicit *obedience*. Nor is there the slightest inconsistency in those three statements: far from being contradictory, they are complementary if preserved in the above order. Though He certainly is not restricted thereto, yet God is pleased, generally, to work in response to the faith and obedience of His people.

It is a very serious mistake to suppose that faith is restricted to a resting upon God's promises; it is equally to be exercised in complying with His precepts. Trusting God is only one part of faith's work. It is far too little recognized that conforming to God's revealed will is also required of faith. Faith always has to do with *God*: He is its object and His Word is its rule and regulator. It was by faith that Noah and his family were delivered from the flood; yet it was because he took to heart the warning God gave him and—being

moved with fear—complied with His directions and “prepared an ark to the saving of his house” (Heb 11:7). It was by faith that Abraham received the land of Canaan for an inheritance; yet in order thereto, when he was called to leave his home, he “obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb 11:8). The man after God’s own heart did something more than confide in Him: “I have *believed* thy commandments” (Psa 119:66) he declared. The divine commandments, equally with the divine promises, were the objects of his faith. Are they of *your* faith, my reader?

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days” (Heb 11:30). For the benefit of the many young preachers who take this magazine, we propose to sermonize that verse, and at the same time, summarize what has been before us in Joshua 6. Let us consider *the daring* of their faith. When Israel crossed the Jordan, they, as it were, burned all their bridges and boats behind them. It was not only the “armed men,” but the whole congregation which was involved. Flight was impossible, and there was no fortress in which to shelter, nor even houses to which they could retire. They were now in the enemy’s territory, completely exposed to him. To advance unto Jericho and to march quietly around its walls (within which were “men of valour,” Jos 6:2) seemed a perilous undertaking, for what was to hinder the Canaanites from shooting at them, or casting down rocks upon them? It was truly an adventure of faith, and it is adventuresome faith which God delights to honour. Unbelief is hesitant and timorous, but daring faith is confident and courageous. “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Pro 28:1). O to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Eph 6:10)!

There are three degrees of faith. There is a faith which *reposes* on the truth of the Gospel, when the weary and heavy-laden sinner comes to Christ and rests his soul upon His atoning sacrifice. There is a faith which *reckons* counting upon the veracity and fidelity of God to fulfil His promises and undertake for us (Rom 4:21; 2Ti 1:12). There is also a faith which *risks*, which dares something for the Lord. That kind of faith was exemplified by Moses when he ventured to confront the king of Egypt, and make known to him Jehovah’s demands. This daring faith was manifested by David, when, with naught but a sling and some pebbles, he went forth and engaged the mighty Goliath. It was demonstrated by Elijah when, single-handedly, he contested with the hosts of Jezebel’s false prophets on Mount Carmel. We see it again in Daniel, when he dared to be cast into the den of lions rather than comply with the idolatrous edict of Babylon’s king; and when his three fellows refused to be intimidated by the fiery furnace. We behold it again and again in the ministry and journeys of the apostle Paul, who shrank not from perils of every conceivable kind, that he might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

In the sequel to each of the above cases, we behold how God *honours* those trusting and brave hearts. God may indeed severely try, but in the end, it will be seen that He never confounds or puts to shame those whose eyes are fixed steadfastly upon Himself, seeking His glory. It is venturesome faith which He ever delights to reward. When those who carried the man sick of the palsy were unable to get near Christ because of the press—and therefore, broke through the roof and lowered the sufferer—so far from changing them with impudence or presumption, “when Jesus saw their faith,” He owned the same by healing the sick man (Mar 2:5). When Peter essayed to walk unto Him upon the sea, Christ rebuked him not for his rashness, but because his faith wavered. Martin Luther (1483-1546) would not be deterred by his friends from going to Worms, saying he would do so, though every tile on its houses was a devil. George Muller (1805-1898) feared not to count upon God to feed and clothe all two thousand orphans, refusing to make an appeal (direct or indirect) for funds. How such examples shame the churches today! How few are prepared to risk anything in the Lord’s service!

Consider next *the obedience* of Israel’s faith—here the most prominent feature of all, Joshua himself, the priests, the armed men, the body of God’s people, carried out all their directions to the letter. The method prescribed as the means appointed not only appeared to be utterly inadequate to reason, but senseless; nevertheless, they were strictly complied with. To do nothing more than walk around the powerful walls of Jericho, and for the priests to blow upon their trumpets of rams’ horns, seemed a childish and ridiculous performance; yet that was what they had been bidden to do. Unquestionable submission to God’s revealed will, an exact carrying out of His instructions—employing none other than those means which He has assigned—is what God requires from us, both in the performance of our daily duties and in that which pertains more especially to His worship and service. We are forbidden to lean unto our own understandings or resort unto our own devices. God has plainly declared His mind unto us in the Holy Scriptures, and they are to be the alone rule and regulator of all our actions. Implicit obedience unto the Lord is absolutely essential if we are to have *His* blessing upon our efforts.

Reader, the divine commandments and precepts often appear strange unto fleshly wisdom. How absurd did God's order appear to the great Naaman when he was bidden to bathe his leprous body in the Jordan; yet there was no healing for him until he complied with the same. How contrary was it to all human ideas for God to send His prophet to be fed for many months by a widow who had naught but a handful of meal and a little oil; yet under Him, it proved amply sufficient. What a testing of Simon's submission when Christ told him to let down the nets for a draught: they had toiled all night and taken nothing, yet said the apostle, "Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net" (Luk 5:5). How unreasonable it must have seemed to the Twelve when Christ bade them tell the vast multitude to sit down, and only five loaves and two little fishes were in sight! And how unreasonable does it now appear unto the majority of preachers and members to heed the call to cast away all the fleshly and worldly devices which have been brought into the churches, substituting fasting and prayer, and counting upon God to bless the preaching of His own Word.

"The obedience of faith" (Rom 16:26). Weigh well those words. Too often has it been affirmed that obedience is an effect or fruit of faith. Obedience is an essential *element* of faith: the one can no more be separated from the other than can the light and heat of the sun. Where there is no true obedience, there is no real faith Godwards. The Gospel requires obedience as truly as it does reliance, for it bids the rebel sinner throw down the weapons of his warfare against God, to repent of his wickedness, and to surrender to the Lordship and yoke of Christ. In 2 Peter 2:21 the Gospel is designated "the holy commandment"; and in 2 Thessalonians 1:8 we are told that Christ will yet take vengeance upon them "that *obey not* the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," which goes on to give the solemn answer to that searching question: "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1Pe 4:17)—namely, they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2Th 1:9). The Gospel does far more than issue an invitation to "receive Christ as a personal Saviour" or offer pardon to all who do so; it first makes known the holy requirements of God for us to forsake our evil ways and submit ourselves to the just claims of Christ.

Christ "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb 5:9): not simply those who trust in Him. In like manner, the Holy Spirit is, by God, "given to them that obey him" (Act 5:32). As we began, so must we continue, and be able to say with David, "Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments" (Psa 119:66). The commandments neither sway the conscience, nor incline the affections until they be received as from God. "As the promises are not believed with a lively faith, unless they draw off the heart from carnal vanities to seek that happiness which they offer to us; so the precepts are not believed rightly, unless we be fully resolved to acquiesce in them as the only rule to guide us in the obtaining of that happiness, and to adhere to them, and to do them"—Thomas Manton (1620-1677). To "*believe* God's commandments" is to hear His voice in them, to submit to His authority, to have our hearts and actions governed by His revealed will in them. If we heed not God concerning our present duties, we do but deceive ourselves when we imagine we are trusting Him with respect to future privileges. We must consent to the commandments as good and blessed in themselves, and love them as issuing from our Father.

COUNSELS REGARDING MARRIAGE

Your immortal soul's welfare, and your other concerns, have possessed a large room in my heart, and that for many years; and I often resolved that if I was spared to see you change your state of life, I would offer you my best advice as to your conduct in that new condition. I intended to have done so at some length, but you know how by a late incident, I have not access to a personal visit so as to talk freely and at large upon that head; and now bodily distress and want of time do not allow my pen to write you as my inclinations suggest: only I offer a hint or two as to your approach in marriage.

This should be a time of much prayer. As before, no doubt, you aimed at impartially asking counsel from Christ, the infallible Counsellor; He can best direct in making a choice: He knows the fittest matches for His people, He chooseth the fittest comforts and cases for them. At this time and afterwards, there must be earnest and continued prayer for the Lord's blessing, and that the covenant-right to the new relation may be cleared, so that the married persons are to take one another out of the Lord's hand as a covenant-mercy, and not to be satisfied with possessing each other by mutual consent and desires; not to be pleased with a mere providential right, such as the very wicked have to their enjoyments, but that they may receive one another from the Lord as gifts of His peculiar love. Christ was invited to the marriage in Cana, so I hope my dear friend is not wanting in inviting Christ to her marriage, and that He may vouchsafe His presence—so necessary to married persons. Plead the gracious promise, "My presence shall go with thee" (Exo 33:14). My soul joins with you in lifting up a prayer for the fulfilment of that promise; it is the Lord's blessing that makes a thing a comfort: the want of it makes a thing not only a cross, but hurtful to the soul. God is to have all the glory of the comfort that at any time you may find in your new relation. We are apt to look unto second causes, and forget the First. He that sendeth the present is the Giver, and not he that bringeth it to us. It is a gain, a new talent, wherewith God intrusts you to occupy withal, and manage for His glory. He puts us into relations to see how we will glorify Him in them: there is something more required of us in them, than as single Christians. God, in your designed state, will have honour from you as a wife.

My dear friend, do not forget that the marriage state has its crosses and sorrows, as well as comforts: we sail in a troublesome and tempestuous sea, and we cannot but meet with a storm before we come to the end of our voyage—there may be a smooth, calm sea at first launching out, but afterward, many storms ere we reach the harbour. Provide and prepare for the ordinary trials in that state of life, and even in time, make the reasonable supposition of uncommon crosses, painted and edged with some circumstances of a cutting and piercing nature. I have sometimes told you that the multiplying of relations proves to be the multiplying of crosses. Happy are they that have God in covenant to support them under their heavy burdens; that sanctifies their afflictions for their spiritual good, and that sweetens their bitter cup of sorrows by assuring them that their Father's wisdom mixed the potion, and His love is at the bottom. It is a great satisfaction in the day of trouble when the Christian can say, I am here where the Lord hath set me: I came not into this state out of mere choice, or rashly and hastily, therefore, I will bear the trials of that state with patience. Seek, O seek, a readiness of heart to part with and yield up again to the Lord your new relative, when the Lord calls for him! You know that mention is made of death in the wording of the marriage vow. The law concerning all our enjoyments is, "the LORD gave, and the LORD taketh away" (Job 1:21). In all your rejoicings, let some things of the vanity of the creature be mingled. Man at his best is altogether vanity. A preparation of the heart to hold or lose the creature is a disposition hard to be attained—to attain a moderation in our possessions and losses, in our joys and griefs: how easily do we exceed in both! O take care that our Lord Jesus Christ be no loser by your marriage, but a gainer; if He be so, He will be the only One and the lovely One, and the Best Beloved of your soul. He will not have an image of jealousy set up in His place, nor be invaded by the creature. Carnal complacency in earthly comforts weakens our delight in God. Lavishing our affections inordinately on the creature and turning Christ out of His room is a very high provocation. It is a heavy case if a relation, a comfort, proves a snare, and entrenches on Christ's prerogative, turning Him off the throne of our heart. That must still be our prevailing temper of soul: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psa 73:25). He must still be the Lord of our heart.

Again, Christ will be a loser by your marriage if either undue or excessive love or distracting cares in family circumstances divert you from the earnest pursuit of heavenly things. There will be a time when

they shall “neither marry, nor [be] given in marriage” (Mat 22:30), and that is the happiest time. There have been many that were diligent, lively Christians in their single state who, in their married state, lost their first love to Christ and His things; and through the cares of life, or the delights of this new state, they became very cold and formal in the things of God: their spiritual life sensibly decayed—but I hope better things of you. Let Christ be a gainer by your marriage, by living more to His praise, in a conscientious and cheerful performance of the duties of personal and relative religion, and that in Christ’s name—“whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col 3:17). A holy, unaffected singularity is absolutely necessary: there is a separation from and non-conformity to the world approved and commanded by the Lord (Rom 12:2). Therefore, we must not regard what the many do, or the multitude of the Lord’s professed people say and do, but what the Lord says and enjoins. The Christian has but one rule, the Holy Scriptures of Truth, the alone rule of faith and practice. It must be a small thing with us to be judged of man, but we must aim at approving ourselves unto God. Man-pleasing has great guilt in it, but to please the Lord is the Christian’s highest ambition: let others seek the praise of men; we are to seek the praise and favour of God, and to be accepted of Him. It is a great branch of practical religion to study Providence, a dark and mysterious book: God is angry with them that mind Him not, that observe not the operation of His hand. We are to study Providence by the Word: the promise and the providence are to be compared together (Psa 77:13).

The memory of the administrations of Providence is to be understood by the Word. There are general rules laid down, whereby we may learn the meaning. We must study providences entirely—view them in their connection. When regarded separately, they appear unsightly and undesirable, but beautiful in their entire scheme. Providence is crowned by the end. We judge not of a picture by the first outline, but by its completed form. We are not to judge of Providence at the first appearance: that is to judge of it before the time. The single threads of providence may seem knotty and uneven, and administer occasion of censure; but will it not raise admiration, when they are seen all woven into a curious piece of branched work? There is a mixture of good and evil, prosperity and adversity, mutually succeeding each other in the life of every Christian. The judgment of this matter God has reserved for Himself; and He acts accordingly, as to the time, manner, degrees, and other circumstances of those changes we meet with. He determines what comfort shall be bestowed upon us, when they shall be denied us, and when they shall be withdrawn from us. He will choose our inheritance for us, and the portion of our cup. We are minors, and cannot choose for ourselves. We—all of us—have our diseases; and the great Physician knows the proper medicines to be applied, fit to work on that particular evil humour which does most abound in us, and how often to repeat these bitter potions.

All the afflictions of the Lord’s people proceed from a mixture of anger and love, yet love is the predominant principle that runs through the whole; not the anger of an enemy, but the anger of a Father, who is guided by wisdom, tempered by love, and intends the good of an offending child. Yet though love is the prevailing principle when we are in the school of affliction, this is hard to be believed; but it is an obvious, certain truth, if we consider the mitigations of them as to length and shortness and the inward support afforded under them, together with God’s gracious ends in them. For as many as God loves, He rebukes and chastens (Heb 12:6); and some of the children, He scourges not with a small rod, but with briars and thorns, and spares them not for their cries. We are to receive His rebukes with humble reverence, and beware of quarrelling with Him or complaining to Him. We are to consider He is a provoked Father, and yet a Father still; and the child under the rod, though a disobedient one, is a child still. O for the belief of that promise, that as to His children, He, as a tender Father, with His own kind hands, will “wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev 21:4)! They shall weep and cry for affliction and for sin no more, for in that day there shall not be found the smallest trace of either! Hallelujah! Now, with my most earnest prayers that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ may richly bless you in time and eternity and make you a blessing wherever you go, and in every relation, I am your affectionate friend, *Henry Davidson*.

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

20. *The Holy Bible, Part 12*

17. *Its promises*, which hold out the highest felicity of which man is capable. There is a natural instinct in the human heart after happiness, yea, after eternal happiness; yet instead of looking unto God for the same, the unregenerate try to find it in the creature. They fondly imagine that satisfaction is to be obtained in things visible, that it is to be found through the medium of the senses. But in vain do they gratify their bodily lusts: material things cannot satisfy the longings of an immaterial spirit. The springs of the earth are unable to quench the thirst of the soul. Wealth does not, for the multi-millionaire is still a stranger to contentment. The honours of the world are but empty baubles, as their securers quickly enough discover. The eager devotees of pleasure find there is no real happiness in any form of amusement. Serious souls are at a loss to know whither to look for that which will reward their quest. "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?" (Psa 4:6): they neither know what it consists of, nor where it is to be found.

Hence it is that the Lord says unto them, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live" (Isa 55:2-3). God *has* "shown" what substantial and lasting "good" consists of, and where it is to be obtained. He has made known the same unto us in the wondrous and blessed *promises* of His Word: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (1Co 2:9-10). This is yet another of the many excellencies of the Bible: that its promises set forth the greatest happiness of which we are capable of enjoying. The One who gave us being is alone capable of putting real gladness into the human heart. That gladness comes to us not through the delights of sense, but consists in communion with the One who is the sum of excellence.

The promises of Scripture are the assurances which God has given us that He will bestow the best of blessings, for this life and also for the life to come, on those who seek them in the right spirit and comply with their terms. From the many hundreds which are scattered throughout the Bible, we can but single out a few specimens. The sum of them is that the soul of man shall delight itself in God Himself as its everlasting portion. But that is impossible until the guilty conscience has been pacified, and that can only be through the knowledge of His forgiveness of sin. Therefore, we begin with the evangelical promises which are addressed unto sinners. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:7). "Come unto me [Christ], all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat 11:28)—peace of conscience, rest of soul, joy of heart. What precious promises are those! They are the promises of Him that cannot lie.

God has solemnly pledged Himself to bestow a free, full, and eternal salvation upon every penitent sinner who comes to Him as a beggar and relies upon His Word. Not only to blot out all his iniquities, but to clothe him with the robe of Christ's righteousness, to receive him as a son, and to henceforth supply his every need. He has promised to be "a sun and shield" unto all such, to "give grace and glory" and that "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psa 84:11). The promises of Satan are lying ones and those of man are unreliable, but every one of God's is infallibly sure. The writer can testify that after forty years of Christian experience, in his travels around this earth, he has never met with a single person who trusted God and found that His promises mocked him. At the close of his long life, Joshua said unto Israel, "Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you" (Jos 23:14). So too acknowledged Solomon: "Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word" (1Ki 8:56).

"And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee" (Psa 50:15). That is a promise which every person may test for himself. We can personally bear emphatic witness that many times have we put that word to the proof and never found it wanting; and many many others too can bear witness that the living God is a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. That is an argument—a well-attested one—which no infidel can answer. There is no gainsaying the fact that thousands of men and women have called upon God in the day of their trouble and were miraculously and gloriously delivered by Him. What a monument to

God's faithfulness in honouring His promises was raised by George Muller (1805-1898) of Bristol, whose two thousand orphans were daily fed and clothed in answer to believing prayer! In like manner shall every one who puts his trust in the divine promises; yet receive fulfilment of that most amazing word, "when [Christ] shall appear, we shall be like him" (1Jo 3:2)—perfectly conformed to His holy image! The divine promises unmistakably bespeak their Author to be none other than "the God of all grace" (1Pe 5:10).

18. *Its profundity.* There are books in the writer's library which thirty years ago he read with no little pleasure and profit. Some of them he has recently re-read—with mingled disappointment and thankfulness. In the past, they were helpful to him: but today, they are too elementary to be of service to him. As he outgrew the clothes of childhood, so every minister of the Gospel who continues to pursue his studies assiduously will advance beyond the primers of his theological youth. Yet no matter how intensely, nor for how many years he may study God's Word, he will never advance beyond it—either spiritually or intellectually. What a laborious and thankless task would it be to read through the ablest human production twenty times! Yet many who have read through the Bible scores of times have testified that it was more attractive and edifying to them than ever. The deeper any regenerate soul digs into the wondrous contents of the Bible, the more will he discover that it contains a boundless and fathomless ocean of Truth, and an inexhaustible mine of precious treasure.

The Bible treats of the most exalted subjects which can engage the mind of man. It rises above the merely human and temporal, and occupies its readers with God, the unseen world, and eternity. Everything is shown to be related to Him whose throne is eternal in the heavens. Human conduct is viewed not so much as it appears unto their performers and fellows, but rather as it appears in the eyes of the Holy One and in the light of the final Day of reckoning. There are many things in Scripture which are above the capacity of man to have devised—such as a Trinity of persons in the Godhead, the divine incarnation and virgin birth of Christ, the union of the human nature to a divine person, and the manner in which the Holy Spirit operates upon souls. A delineation of fallen nature is given, such as neither philosophy nor medical science could furnish; the secret workings of the heart are exposed in a manner which no analysis of the self-styled "psychiatrists" could supply. Parts of human history are chronicled not for the purpose of magnifying man, but to show how far the human race has departed from God, and what obstacles stand in the way of recovery to holiness and happiness. Heaven and the everlasting bliss of the redeemed are portrayed not in a manner to gratify curiosity; still less to appeal unto the corruptions of the natural man, but at that place into which nothing that defiles can enter.

The profundity of its teaching appears throughout the pages of the Sacred Volume. The origin of sin, the fall of man, the federal relation of Adam to his posterity, the transmission of his own nature to all his descendants, the consistency of man's freedom with God's sovereignty, his total depravity with his accountability, the justification of a believing sinner by the imputed righteousness of Christ, and his union to Him as a member of His mystical body admit of no philosophical explanation. They defy intellectual dissection and cannot be mapped out so as to show their precise points of contact or mode of union with each other. They are not reducible to a system of "a common sense," but rather are presented as awful and insoluble mysteries. They possess depths which no man can sound and heights which none can scale. Yet so far from stumbling the reverent student of the Bible, those very mysteries are just what he expects to find in a book written by the Most High. They are designed to humble the arrogance of man, by a demonstration of his intellectual limitations, and should cause him to exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom 11:33).

19. *Its simplicity.* Here is a remarkable phenomenon: that combined with real profundity, there is the utmost simplicity. Here again we find the same thing characterizing the Word of God as appears in His works of creation: while there is much that is occult, yet there is much more that is plain and obvious. Though there be recondite prophecies and abstruse doctrines, yet on all practical matters and points of duty, the Scriptures are so clear that they may be understood by the dumbest minds. What is more explicit than the precepts? "The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple" (Psa 19:7). Though there be things in the Bible which are sufficient to confound the proudest efforts of human reason, yet it does not, as to its general tenor, require either genius or erudition to grasp its terms, but is adapted to the level of the unsophisticated. Since its contents are of universal concernment, they are presented in language suited to the capacity of all. That which concerns man's temporal well-being and everlasting felicity is written so distinctly that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. Though there be depths which no leviathan can swim, yet the babe in Christ may safely wade in its refreshing streams.

Though the Bible is full of majesty, yet the naked Truth itself is presented in a manner suited to the meanest capacity. God graciously accommodates Himself to our limitations, setting forth His mighty power under such a figure as the baring of His arm, and represents heaven unto His people as the Father's house in which "are many mansions" (Joh 14:2). Its very unaffectedness is perfectly suited to the gravity of its Author. Its penmen employed not the "enticing words of man's wisdom," but wrote "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1Co 2:4). The Bible is not written in the style of the "classics": there is an entire absence of any appearance of art. Take the four Gospels. Their obvious design is to magnify the Redeemer, yet they never resort to the usual method of panegyric. There is a plain statement of His virtuous life, yet no eulogizing of His perfections. His most gracious works are plainly recorded, and no attempt is made to heighten their effect. His wondrous miracles are chronicled as matters of fact, to speak for themselves, no comment being passed upon them, no note of admiration affixed to them. They are sufficient to suitably impress our minds, without any remarks from the narrators. In all of this, the candid mind will perceive the signature of truth, an unadorned account of events which actually took place.

20. *Its impartiality.* To fully appreciate this striking feature of the Bible, the reader needs to cast his mind back to the conditions prevailing in society during the centuries when it was written. Women were then the mere chattel of men, slavery was extensively practiced—and with the utmost rigour—while kings reigned with the most despotic sway. Yet the teachings of Holy Writ are without the least bias, requiring obedience to their imperial edicts from all classes alike. So far from being written to keep the oppressed in awe and subjection, rulers and ruled are the subjects of its authoritative commands. Kings and subjects are bound by the same laws, liable to the same punishments, encouraged by the same promises. God's Word declares, "There is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:22-23); while it also announces, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom 10:13). Such declarations as those were entirely foreign to the spirit and sentiments which universally prevailed in the day of God's prophets and apostles.

The Gospel of Christ is designed for no privileged class, but is to be preached to "every creature" (Mar 16:15). It does not prescribe one way of salvation for the rich, and another for the poor—rather does it affirm on the one hand, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mar 10:23), and on the other, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world" (Jam 2:5). There is no toadying to the scholar or sage: "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Mat 11:25). Husbands are bidden to "love their wives as their own bodies" (Eph 5:28); and masters are enjoined to treat their servants in a manner which comports with the fact that they too have a Master in heaven with whom there is respect of persons (Eph 6:9). No such declaration as the following was ever coined by an impostor: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

21. *Its comprehensiveness.* God's Word is a compendious and complete Rule of life, so that we may be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2Ti 3:17). Every truth in it is designed to influence our character and conduct. It contains full and explicit instructions for all our relative duties. No case has ever occurred, or ever will, for which adequate provision has not been made in its invaluable treasury. Here are directions suited to any situation in which we may find ourselves. Whether its reader be young or old, male or female, rich or poor, illiterate or learned, he may find that which will supply all his need. That any should read it without receiving any benefit therefrom is due alone to his own vanity or perversity. His duty and his danger are plainly marked out as though it had been written for him alone. Its very fullness proclaims its author: it is a revelation and communication from the Infinite One. Its contents have supplied material for thousands of books and matter for millions of sermons.

The Bible is more than a book: it is a library. Its history covers a period of four thousand years. Its prophecies extend to literally dozens of nations. Its teachings respect good and evil, God and man, time, and eternity. It makes known how He is to be worshipped acceptably. It informs us how His blessing may be secured upon the home. It reveals the secrets of health and longevity. Here is milk for babes, meat for the strong, medicine for the sick, relief for the weary, consolation for the dying. The particular experience of every believer is so vividly delineated therein that whoever reads it aright may discover his precise state and degree of progress. In the Bible is stored up more true wisdom, which has endured the trial of the centuries, than the sum total of thinking done by men since the dawn of human history down to the present hour. Of all the books in the world, the Bible alone can rightly be said to be comprehensive and complete. It needs no addendum. It has been truly affirmed, "If every book but the Bible were destroyed, not a single

spiritual truth would be lost”—R. A. Torrey (1856-1928). The comprehensiveness and fullness of the Scriptures is yet another of their innumerable evidences which demonstrate their divine inspiration.

22. *Its conciseness.* Here is yet another remarkable feature which distinguishes the Bible from other books: though it be the most comprehensive of all, yet it is the most compact. Though it contains a complete library, having no less than sixty-six books within its covers, yet a small-print copy may be carried in one's pocket. Though there is here an amazing fullness, yet no prolixity. There is an abundance of matter wrapped up in a few words. An epitome of the heavens and earth, an account of the forming of this world into an habitable globe, the creation of its denizens, the making of man, the formation of woman, their state in Paradise, a description of the garden of Eden, are all condensed into two chapters which require but two pages! If “brevity” be “the soul of wit,” then here is the quintessence of wisdom. A vivid description of the fall of our first parents, how it was brought about, with the effects thereof; to which is subjoined the appearing of the Lord, their arraignment by Him, with their trial, sentence, and expulsion from the garden, are all given within the space of only twenty-four verses: briefly narrated, yet all-sufficient to answer every purpose for which the revelation of the same is made to us.

Within the space of seven chapters, we have the creation and furnishing of the world, the apostasy of our first parents, the birth of Abel and Cain, an account of their worship of God, the murder of the former, and an enumeration of seven generations of the latter, with a description of ten of the progenitors of Christ. In addition, we find in them an account of the wickedness of men, the announcement of God that He purposed to destroy the earth and the human race; His detailed instructions to Noah for the building of an ark, in which were to be preserved himself, his family, and representatives of all living creatures. Then we have described the coming of the flood, the destruction of the old world, and the salvation of all within the ark! All the wisdom of men could not have expressed and compressed subjects of such vast importance and interests within so brief a compass. Moses himself could not, unless he had been inspired by the Holy Spirit. No book besides the Bible contains so much in so short a space. The brevity of Scripture is beyond imitation. The wisdom of God is most gloriously displayed in revealing so much in language so simply and so succinct. There is nothing within the wide range of human literature which in the least resembles this striking yet little-noticed feature.

The unique brevity of Holy Writ only becomes really apparent when we compare the biographies which men have written and the systems of religion which they have drawn up. The Jews have joined to the Scriptures their Talmuds, to which they affix equal authority—the one followed by most of their rabbis consists of twelve folio volumes; while the Romanists receive with the same veneration the writings of “the fathers,” the decisions of the “councils,” the vast accumulations of synodal edicts and papal decretals and bulls, and a mass of “traditions” respecting both faith and morals. Who among uninspired historians and narrators would or could have recorded the birth, life, ministry, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ in less than twelve hundred lines? Who among them could have related the history of Christianity during the first history of its most memorable years within the space of thirty pages? For fullness and brevity, dramatic description yet terseness of language, for outlines of sermons, details of miraculous conversions, intervention of angels, all pictured with a few brief touches, there is nothing comparable to the Acts of the Apostles. What but the divine Mind could have comprehended in so small a book as the Bible such an immense store of information and instruction?

WELCOME TIDINGS

The newspapers record the deeds of men, and sad reading they make; the less time we devote to their soul-defiling contents, the better for our good. The saint should be constantly occupied with the doings and dealings of *the Lord*. The more he is so, the more will faith be strengthened, the heart lifted above this sinful scene, and the soul drawn out in thanksgiving and worship unto God. It is one of the marks of the low spirituality which now obtains among Christians that songs of praise are so rarely upon their lips. Only too often there is little to distinguish *their* conversation from that of the poor worldlings. When one believer meets another, instead of alluding to the weather or making reference to the political or international situation, he should say, "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together" (Psa 34:3). Instead of talking about your trials and troubles, tell of the Lord's mercy and faithfulness to you: thereby He will be honoured, and your hearer cheered and edified.

"Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psa 107:8). That "Oh" is a note of exclamation and astonishment, expressing the ardour of the Psalmist's spirit. Three times more he uses the same language in that psalm. He was troubled at the abounding ingratitude and cold indifference of those around him, and his interjection should startle and shame many of us today. God has expressly bidden us to "praise him for his mighty acts" (Psa 150:20). While He is to be highly extolled for what He is in Himself, over and above all His blessings, yet He is also to be acknowledged and adored for His wonders in creation, providence, and grace. "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts" (Psa 145:4). It is fitting that we should magnify Him for what He has done for us. "While I live will I praise the LORD" (Psa 146:2): let that be the determination of every Christian reader. "A very wretch, Lord, I should prove, had I no love for Thee; rather than not Thy praises sing, O may I cease to be."

As one of the lesser-known Puritans said, "We read of the saints having harps in their hands, the emblems of praise. But though many have tears in their eyes and complaints on their lips, few have harps in their hands, blessing and glorifying God"—Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686). We might think it almost incredible that of the ten lepers cleansed by Christ, only one returned to give glory to God; yet observation shows it was sadly true to life. It is with the object of stirring up our readers to thanksgiving unto God that we insert this brief "Welcome Tidings" every year. We desire them to join with us in praising our Master, that He continues, in His infinite grace, to use our feeble efforts in blessing one and another; that even in this dark day, He is maintaining a witness to Himself in various places. Many are the encouraging letters still coming in; from a few of which we quote.

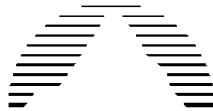
"I have been greatly helped by reading your article, 'Sin's Presence.' I never read anything in my life so like my own experience" (Ireland). "I cannot tell you how happy we are here for you and your faithful writings in these days when we find so little sincere milk of the Word" (Wyoming). "Your *Studies* continue to be the one source in current writings in which any doctrine is taught" (New Jersey). "Your work has been a greater blessing to me than anything I have in my library, except God's Word" (Preacher in Texas). "We have a little group with whom we share your messages, and I wish you knew their appreciation of them" (Alabama). "Your articles are like the Scriptures: profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness" (Canada). "This is one young minister who thanks God for you, for your labours have blessed me and helped me to better serve Him whom I love" (Oklahoma). Thank you for the *Studies*. I never read anything so discriminating, or that opens the Scripture so minutely. May God bless you in your own experience" (England).

"It is our usual custom to remember your written ministry both morning and evening, in all the details of the work" (Australia)—we greatly appreciate such prayer-help. "I do not know where I could go for more searching teaching, spiritual help, or comfort, in present-day publications, than yours" (Florida). "God has been pleased to use my employment of your writings to the conversion and up-building of numbers of my adult Bible class" (California). "It would be a tragedy if you ceased publishing, for no other magazine or periodical gives to us such solid meat. I always look forward to your next issues" (Preacher in England). "I praise God for the practical application and exhortations to obedience which the *Studies* contain. But I seem to be a very slow pupil in working out the latter. Sometimes it seems as if I am taking one step forward with one foot, and sliding back two with the other. Yet I know by the Word, and by experi-

ence, that a cleaving unto the Lord is the divine solution. How glorious that His compassions fail not, that great is *His* faithfulness” (Washington).

“Please accept the enclosed and my deep appreciation as some of the debt I owe you and your wife for the kindness and regularity with which you have sent me your magazine. I have received much instruction, consolation, and rebuke” (Preacher in England). “I can never tell you what your writings have been to my soul: they have given me more solid comfort and stability than any other magazine I have ever had” (Preacher in Wisconsin). “O that the Lord may be pleased to spare you yet a good while for the benefit of us who need more and more of the Truth made clear through the Word and our own experience. As I follow your exercise of mind in most all your articles, I glean after you. I hardly know which I enjoy best, but if any difference, I would say ‘The Life and Times of Joshua.’ There is not one in this our day who is worth as much for both my learning and comfort as your labours through the grace and mercy of God” (Preacher in North Carolina).

“Last winter, from December to April, I was snowbound in my little home by the sea. Every evening, I studied your teachings to the enrichment of my spirit. It enables me to know what the Lord requires of me” (U.S.A.). “Both my wife and I wish to thank you for the faithful, fresh, and most helpful ministry of the Word from your pen. We have both read and re-read your *Studies*, and praise His name for the well-rounded expositions” (Preacher). “The *Studies* are very much appreciated, as their depth and detail are in such contrast to many of the present-day publications” (New Zealand). “Your expositions of the Scriptures are now appreciated more than ever. A testimony on these lines, of course, involves a cutting off from most, as they will not accept it” (Australia). The Lord be praised for such encouraging testimonies—A.W. and V. E. Pink.



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