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LESSON 3

BLESSINGS TO JEW AND GENTILE; BLIND WATCHMEN

January 19, 1929

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Isa. 56.
MEMORY VERSE: Isa. 56:2.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into two distinct parts. Verses 1-8 deal with the promises of God to all who do His will. Lest some should think that they themselves are left out, the strangers and the eunuchs are especially mentioned. The Sabbath is vital to His covenant. The keeping of the Sabbath in verses 2, 4, and 6, is shown to be one of the conditions of receiving God's blessings. These promises and conditions apply to all other peoples as well as to the Jews.

Verses 9-12 state the condition of the blind watchmen. While we need to be careful in any local application of these statements, we must not forget that this is God's view of the situation. We need to pray God to make us faithful watchmen on the walls of Zion, and that we be not charged with surfeiting or drunkenness. We should be wholly clear ourselves of that which we condemn in others.

THE LESSON

1. What are we told to keep and to do? What is near, and what is about to be revealed?
Isa. 56:1.

Note.—“Keep ye judgment, and do justice,” might well be

translated, “Keep ye law, and do righteousness.” — Pulpit Commentary. This has a special application to this time. It has always been the duty of God's children to keep His law.

2. What is said of the man that keeps the Sabbath and refrains from evil? Verse 2.

Note.—This blessing is not for the Jews only, but for “man” and the “son of man.” Neither is the blessing for the one who only once does it, but to him who “layeth hold on it,” “holds to it,” as Moffatt translates the text.

“Keepeth the Sabbath.” How much that includes! It requires nothing less than holiness. “No other institution which was committed to the Jews tended so fully to distinguish them from surrounding nations as did the Sabbath. . . . To keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ.”—“The Desire of Ages,” p. 283.

3. What should the son of a stranger or the eunuch not say? Verse 3.

Note.—“Many from among the sons of the strangers were to learn to love Him as their Creator and their Redeemer; they were to begin the observance of His holy Sabbath day as a memorial of His creative power; and when He should make ‘bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations,’ to deliver His people from captivity, ‘all the ends of the earth’ should see of the salvation of God. Many of these converts from heathenism would wish to unite themselves fully with the Israelites, and accompany them on the return journey to Judea. None of these were to say, ‘The Lord hath utterly separated me from His people;’ for the word of God through His prophet to those who should yield themselves to Him and observe His law, was that they should thenceforth be numbered among spiritual Israel—His church on earth.”—“Prophets and Kings,” p. 372.

“Eunuch.” As the eunuch could not become the head of a family in Israel, he might fear that he could have no share in the hopes of Israel. God here allays the fear that any physical disability will keep a man out of heaven.

4. What three things are mentioned of the eunuchs whom the Lord addresses? Verse 4.

Note.—‘Keep My Sabbaths.’ Of all the Ten Commandments the fourth is the one chosen as the test and condition of one of the most beautiful promises either in the Old or the New Testament, as mentioned in the next verse.

“Choose the things that please Me.” Christ pleased not Himself. We are not to please ourselves. In eating or drinking, in dress or adornment, in association or friendship, in the thousand decisions that come to us daily, the question should always be: What will please Him?

“Take hold of My covenant.” The thought here is not merely to “take hold of,” but to hold fast, not to give up.

5. What two things will God give to them? How is the name further designated? Verse 5.

Note.—“A place.” This place will be “in Mine house and within My walls.” While this special promise is given to the eunuchs, we may believe God is no respecter of persons. The same promise applies to all. The eunuchs to whom these promises were especially given, would have no sons or daughters. God, therefore, promises them something better. God will more than restore and make up for anything of which we may in this life be deprived. Sph. 3:20.

“An everlasting name.” Some names will be blotted out. Some will remain. Rev. 3:5.

6. What do the strangers do that join themselves to the Lord? Verse 6.

Note.—‘Serve Him.’ To join ourselves to the Lord means more than to subscribe to a creed. It means service.

To love the name of the Lord is to love all that name stands for.

“His servants” means worshipers. It includes the act of worshiping as also the mode and form.

“Keepeth the Sabbath.” This is included in true worship. Whoever “join themselves to the Lord” will be Sabbath keepers. It should be noted that God here again selects the fourth commandment out of all the ten as the test commandment.

“Taketh hold of My covenant.” He that “holdeth fast”

the covenant will ever experience the blessing of forgiveness of sin and the renewing grace of God, and will be in harmony with God's law.

7. Where will God bring the strangers? Where shall they be made joyful? What will God accept from them? What shall God's house be called? Verse 7.

Note.—“My holy mountain,” Jerusalem, or the church of Christ. Also symbolic of the new earth. Isa. 11:9; 65:25.

“House of prayer,” the temple. (The Desire of Ages,” p. 27.) After “My house” had become “your house” (Matt. 21:13; 23:38); that is, after God had rejected the temple and its services, any place where God's people assemble is a place of prayer. Acts 12:5, 12; 16:13.

“An house of prayer.” Prayer is more than asking for things. Prayer is communion. God's house is a “house of prayer for all people.” That is, all are invited to come and pray, not for themselves alone, but for their neighbors here at home as well as in far-off fields. Thus in a double sense God's house is a “house of prayer for all people.”

8. How does the Lord speak of Himself? What does He say of the ingathering of the Gentiles? Verse 8.

9. What is said to the beasts of the field and of the forest? Verse 9.

Note.—Verse 9 begins a new section. The wild beasts are the enemies of God's people, who are coming to devour the flock because the shepherds are asleep. (See Eze. 34:7-10.)

10. How are the watchmen described? Verse 10.

11. What further is said of them? Of what are they incapable? Which way do they look? For what reason? Verse 11.

12. What do they say? With what will they be filled? What is said of to-morrow? Verse 12.

Note.—It would be unjust as well as untrue to make a general application of these verses. There are many honest souls, priests as well as people, who are living up to all the light they have. These God will lead into still greater light. But there are also those to whom these verses refer in all their force.

LESSON 4 THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE

January 26, 1929

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Isa. 57.

MEMORY VERSE: Isa. 57:15.

INTRODUCTION

Verses 1 and 2 we have always and rightly applied to the time just before the beginning of the plagues. God will cause some to sleep that He may deliver them from the evil to come.

Verses 3-13 speak of the condition of the wicked at the same time. They make “sport” of God's true children, they go into depths of sin and degradation. They weary of their own wickedness, yet they do not repent.

In that time of peril, God will not forsake His own. He will dwell with the contrite and humble, and revive them. He will give them peace. The wicked, on the other hand, will continue to throw up “mire and dirt.” For them there is no peace.

THE LESSON

1. After describing the unfaithful watchmen, what is said of the righteous? What happens to merciful men? What is not considered? Isa. 57:1.

Note.—“Taken away from the evil to come.” Josiah was promised that he would be taken away before the evil should come. 2 Kings 22:20. So with these. At the time when the Sabbath is the test, when the watchmen are sleeping, when the day of trouble is approaching, some will be “taken away from the evil to come.”

2. Into what shall they enter? How shall they rest? How have they walked? Verse 2.

Note.—“Into peace.” “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.” Rev. 14:13. They rest while the world goes on. The last struggle is in progress. The two-horned beast of Revelation 13 is publishing his decree that whoever will not worship the image of the beast shall be killed. Rev. 13:15. God's people are entering into the time of Jacob's trouble. It is a terrific final struggle. During this time, some of God's people have entered “into peace.” “Rest in their beds.”

“Each one walking,” rather “each one that walked,” referring to those who have entered into peace.

3. What is said of the wickedness of evil men at this time? Verses 3-10.

Note.—The following suggestions are offered concerning the meaning of these verses:

Verses 3-10 are in sharp contrast with that which precedes them. God has been speaking of the righteous. Now He turns to the scoffers that “sport” themselves. It is evidently the few righteous that still live among them who are the object of this mocking. Even as Ishmael mocked Isaac (Gen. 21:9), and as there shall come mockers in the last days (2 Peter 3:3), so these mock. To make “a wide mouth,” to “draw out the tongue,” are childish gestures, an evidence of a complete lack of decency and self-respect.

This description definitely points out who are meant in the following verses. They are the “children of transgression,” that debase themselves “even unto hell.” Verses 4, 9.

4. What does God say further of these wicked ones? What has God done? Verse 11.

Note.—“Thou hast lied.” God here asks of whom these people are afraid that they should think it necessary to lie. It can not be that they are afraid of God, for they do not believe in Him. The thought of lying to God is there also. Some of these people of rebellion profess to be God's children—their very profession is a lie.

5. What will God declare? Of what profit shall it be? Verse 12.

6. How does God contrast putting trust in companions with putting trust in Him? Verse 13.

Note.—Trust is the characteristic Old Testament word for the New Testament words “faith,” “belief.” It occurs one hundred fifty-two times in the Old Testament, and is the rendering of Hebrew words signifying to take refuge, as in Ruth 2:12; to lean on, Psalm 56:3; to stay upon, Job 35:14.

7. What shall be said? Verse 14.

Note.—“It shall be said,” American Revised Version, margin.

“Cast ye up.” That is, make a highway by heaping up material for it, and take all obstructions out of the way. (See Isa.

62:10.)

8. Who is the speaker of these words? Where is His habitation? What name is given Him? Where does He dwell? With whom also will He make His abode? For what purpose? Verse 15.

Note.—“High and lofty One.” The same as “high and lifted up” in Isaiah 6:1. “Inhabiteth eternity.” Lives forever, enthroned forever.

‘Holy.’ Even as God is love, so also He is holy. That, in fact, is His name. Holiness includes all the characteristics of God.

“I saw then what faint views some have of the holiness of God, and how much they take His holy and reverend name in vain, without realizing that it is God, the great and terrible God, of whom they are speaking. . . .

“I also saw that many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary, through the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal of the living God, and are protected in the time of trouble, must reflect the image of Jesus fully.”—“Early Writings,” pp. 70, 71.

9. What will God not do? What reason is given for this? Verse 16.

Note.—God will not keep His anger forever. Ps. 103:9. If God did so, no one could stand before Him. God’s actions are based on His mercy. If God should hold all to strict accountability, none could stand. Ps. 130:3.

10. Why was God wroth? What did He do? What did the people do? Verse 17.

Note.—Covetousness is idolatry. Col. 3:5. “The greatest sin which now exists in the church is covetousness.”—“Testimonies,” Vol. 1, p. 194.

“The law of tithing was founded upon an enduring principle, and was designed to be a blessing to man. The system of benevolence was arranged to prevent that great evil, covetousness. Christ saw that in the prosecution of business the love of riches would be the greatest cause of rooting true godliness out of the heart. He saw that the love of money would freeze deep and hard into men’s souls, stopping the flow of generous impulses, and closing their

senses to the wants of the suffering and the afflicted. . . . Covetousness is one of the most common and popular sins of the last days, and has a paralyzing influence upon the soul.”—“Testimonies,” Vol. 3, p. 547.

“Smote him.” Covetousness is here selected as the typical sin. For this God was “wroth, and smote him.” For example, see Acts 5:1-11.

“I hid me.” It is sin that separates from God. Isa. 59:2.

“He went on.” Israel did not heed. “He went on” in his own way. How true that is of many professed Christians today!

11. What has God seen? What will He do? What more will God do? Verse 18.

Note.—“I have seen.” God is fully aware of conditions. “Will heal him.” He will heal the contrite ones. What a wonderful God is ours! He knows our way, that we have gone astray. Yet He does not leave us to ourselves.

“I will lead him.” Even though we have gone our own way, God does not forsake us. He will still lead us. Though many have gone their own way, God does not forsake them, but leads them until they are brought back to Him!

“Restore comforts.” There is no real comfort in sin; but there is wonderful comfort in the knowledge of sin forgiven.

12. What does God create? What message is to be brought to him that is afar off and to him that is near? Verse 19.

Note.—“The fruit of the lips” means praise and thanksgiving. Heb. 13:15.

“Peace, peace.” At the birth of Christ the angels sang, “Peace, good will toward men.” Luke 2:14. At the close of His ministry, Christ said, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.” John 14:27; 16:33.

13. To what are the wicked likened? Verse 20.

14. For whom is there no peace? Verse 21.

Note.—The wicked may engage in amusements and entertainments to divert the mind, but true, enduring peace is found only in Christ, and is not theirs.

LESSON 5
TRUE FASTING; THE SABBATH RESTORED

February 2, 1929

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Isa. 58.

MEMORY VERSE: Isa. 58:13,

14.

INTRODUCTION

“What saith the Lord in the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah? The whole chapter is of the highest importance.”—“Testimonies,” Vol. 8, p. 159.

This chapter is directed to God’s people. “It is not the wicked world, but those whom the Lord designates as ‘My people,’ that are to be reproved for their transgressions.”—“The Great Controversy,” p. 452. “The prophet is addressing Sabbath keepers, not sinners, not unbelievers.”—“Testimonies,” Vol. 2, p. 36.

“The fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah is a prescription for maladies of the body and of the soul. If we desire health and the true joy of life, we must put into practice the rules given in this scripture.”—“The Ministry of Healing,” p. 256.

THE LESSON

1. How is the prophet told to make this announcement? How should he lift up his voice? Who are to have their sins pointed out? Isa. 58:1.

Note.—“Spare not.” Do not smooth matters over. Tell the truth.

“Transgression.” Sin is sin; righteousness is righteousness. The trumpet note of warning must be sounded. We are living in a fearfully wicked age. The worship of God will become corrupted unless there are wide-awake men at every post of duty. It is no time now for any to be absorbed in selfish ease. Not one of the words which God has spoken must be allowed to fall to the ground.”—“Testimonies,” Vol. 4, p. 517.

2. How regularly do His people seek Him? In what do they delight? What have they not forsaken? For what do they ask? In what, further, do they take delight? Verse 2.

Note.—“Daily.” It is possible, then, to seek the Lord daily, to have family worship and private devotions, and yet not be right with God. What an alarming and heart-searching thought!

These people delight to know God’s ways. They are eager to know the divine will, as eager as if they were in reality a peo-

ple that practiced righteousness. They are not conscious hypocrites—quite the reverse. But they seem to lack a proper appreciation of what constitutes true religion.

"The ordinance of their God," the law.

3. What complaint do they bring against God? Of what do they say He takes no notice? What answer does God give? Verse 3.

Note.—Having fasted, these people expect God to take heed and give them due credit, or reward. Now they complain that God apparently has not seen them. They are willing to conform to all the requirements of religion, but they want recognition for it, they want pay.

Real fasting presupposes such a seeking of God that worldly things will be forgotten. True fasting permits of no other "business" than that of seeking God. Merely to be hungry is not to fast.

4. For what purpose do they fast? How does God say they do not fast? Verse 4.

Note.—Fasting should humble the spirit and produce kindness and love in the heart for others. The fasting here spoken of produced irritation and ill feeling, even to the point of angry debate and "smiting."

"Ye fast not this day so as to make your voice to be heard on high," American Revised Version. Their fast was not such that God could hear them.

5. What questions does God ask? Verse 5.

Note.—God disapproves of the kind of fasting here mentioned. "Jesus said, 'When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret.' Whatever is done to the glory of God is to be done with cheerfulness, not with sadness and gloom. There is nothing gloomy in the religion of Jesus."—"Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing," p. 131. (See also Matt. 6:16-18.)

6. What four things are mentioned as being included in true fasting? Verse 6.

Note.—"Loose the bands of wickedness;" to free from unjust and oppressive obligations.

"Undo the heavy burdens;" literally, to untie the bands of the yoke.

"Let the oppressed go free;" literally the "broken." Probably such as through debt had forfeited their liberty. (See Neh. 5:8.)

"Break every yoke." This includes all that hinders in any way. Every yoke that holds you must be put aside.

7. What are we to do for the hungry? For the poor? For the naked? From whom must we not hide? Verse 7.

Note.—Read "Testimonies," Vol. 2, pp. 32-35.

"In all our work, the principle of unselfishness revealed in Christ's life is to be carried out. Upon the walls of our homes, the pictures, the furnishings, we are to read, 'Bring the poor that are cast out to thy house.' On our wardrobes we are to see written, as with the finger of God, 'Clothe the naked.' In the dining room, on the table laden with abundant food, we should see traced, 'Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry?'"—"The Ministry of Healing," p. 206.

8. What will come to those who do God's will? What is said of their health? What will go before them? What will be their rereward? Verse 8.

Note.—"Righteousness shall go before." A life dedicated to doing good can not be hid under a bushel. The fame of it will spread far and wide and "go before." So also in regard to the life to come. Any good done will go before and come up before God as a sweet savor. (See Acts 10:4.)

"Glory of the Lord." Rereward means rear guard. As the pillar of cloud and of fire was a protection to Israel, so God's people now are promised God's glory as their protection. (See Ex. 14:19-25.)

9. What shall be the experience of those who fast according to God's conditions? What three things, however, must be taken away? Verse 9.

Note.—"Take away . . . the yoke," referred to in verse 6.

"Putting forth of the finger," a gesture of contempt.

"Speaking vanity," speaking evil.

10. What other two conditions are mentioned? What promises are given? Verse 10.

11. What beautiful promise of guidance is given? How will the Lord satisfy His own? What

will they be like? Verse 11.

Note.—If we satisfy the afflicted soul, God will satisfy our soul.

"A watered garden." "A spring of water." When the drought comes, the test comes. In the dark days of life true Christianity reveals itself. It is for that specific time that these promises hold.

12. What will happen to the old waste places? What will be raised up? What will they who do this be called? Verse 12.

Note.—"This prophecy also applies in our time. The breach was made in the law of God when the Sabbath was changed by the Romish power. But the time has come for that divine institution to be restored. The breach is to be repaired, and the foundation of many generations to be raised up."—"The Great Controversy," p. 453.

"The prophet here describes a people who, in a time of general departure from truth and righteousness, are seeking to restore the principles that are the foundation of the kingdom of God. They are repairers of a breach that has been made in God's law,—the wall that He has placed around His chosen ones for their protection, and obedience to whose precepts of justice, truth, and purity, is to be their perpetual safeguard."—"Prophets and Kings," pp. 677, 678.

13. From what are we to turn away our foot? What may we not do on the holy day? What three descriptive words are used of the Sabbath? Whom are we to honor? In what three ways may that be done? Verse 13.

Note.—"When the Sabbath commences we should place a guard upon ourselves, upon our acts and our words, lest we rob God by appropriating to our own use that time which is strictly the Lord's. We should not do ourselves, nor suffer our children to do, any manner of our own work for a livelihood, or anything which could have been done on the six working days. Friday is the day of preparation. Time can then be devoted to making the necessary preparation for the Sabbath, and to thinking and conversing about it. Nothing which will in the sight of Heaven be regarded as a violation of the holy Sabbath

should be left unsaid or undone, to be said or done upon the Sabbath.

"God requires not only that we refrain from physical labor upon the Sabbath, but that the mind be disciplined to dwell upon sacred themes. The fourth commandment is virtually transgressed by conversing upon worldly things, or by engaging in light and trifling conversation. Talking upon anything or everything which may come into the mind, is speaking our own words. Every deviation from right brings us into bondage and condemnation."—"Testimonies," Vol. 2, pp. 702, 103.

Religion, Sabbath keeping, all spiritual exercises, should be considered a privilege rather than a yoke. Only thus considered can they ever be a delight.

14. What should come as a result of true Sabbath keeping? What promises are given? Who has said this? Verse 14.

Note.—"High places of the earth," that is, "I will carry thee triumphantly over all obstacles."—Cambridge Bible.

"Feed thee," cause thee to enjoy.

LESSON 6

A REDEEMER PROMISED TO A PENITENT PEOPLE

February 9, 1920

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Isa. 59.
MEMORY VERSE: Isa. 59:1, 2.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a continuation of the preceding one. It reveals the reason for the Lord's not hearing or answering the prayers of the people. The people seem aware of their real condition, for in Isaiah 59:12 they admit that their iniquities are known to them, and that their sins testify against them.

The first fifteen verses of this chapter present a picture of terrible backsliding. A profession of Christianity has been used as a cloak for evil. Churchgoers have had a form of godliness without the power thereof. They admit that they have been neither truthful nor just, that they have made crooked paths, and, as the result, have stumbled like blind men. The situation is not hopeless, however, for the Lord Himself will gird up His loins like a man of war and deliver His people.

The lesson is clear. Sin will cause God to hide His face from us; but in turning from our iniquities, God will cause the Redeemer to come to Zion.

THE LESSON

1. What is said of the Lord's power to save and of His ability to hear? Isa. 59:1.

Note.—This verse is God's answer to the complaint made in the preceding chapter that God had not heard the requests of His people though they had fasted and afflicted their souls.

2. What has caused separation between God and His people? Why has God hidden His face? Verse 2; Deut. 31:17.

3. What has been defiled with blood and with iniquity? What is said of the lips and tongue? Isa. 59:3; 1:15.

4. For what do the people not call or plead? In what do they trust? What do they speak? What do they conceive and bring forth? Isa. 59:4.

5. What two illustrations are used? What happens if the egg is eaten, and what if it is crushed? Verse 5.

Note.—A cockatrice, the same as adder or basilisk, is a venomous serpent. A double image is here used, that of a cockatrice and a spider. The hatching of a cockatrice's eggs doubtless refers to the hatching of schemes by wicked men. These schemes take time for development, and all that is involved in them may not at once be apparent. Many plans look innocent and do not seem fraught with danger, but there is death in them. Of such are all attempts at religious legislation. Ostensibly innocent and said to be for the good of the people, there is seen but the hatching of cockatrice's eggs. Whoever eats of the eggs, that is, are in favor of and fall in with such schemes, will reap the sure result.

"That which is crushed." Some of the schemes will not materialize, but will be crushed. Opposition will develop. And it is at such a time that the real nature of the scheme will be revealed. It will break out "into a viper." Men will then show the spirit that animates them. As the figure of the cockatrice brings out the deadly nature of the schemes laid by wicked men, so that of the spider reveals the futility.

6. What shall the webs not become? With what are they unable to cover themselves? What are their works said to be? What is in their hands? Verse 6.

Note.—A spider's web is designed to catch unwary insects. But here an additional application is made of the figure. While evil men are hatching out deep-laid schemes, presented under the figure of cockatrice's eggs, they are trying to cover their real intention in a garment composed of spider's web. But who can shield himself in such a garment? Men may think they can hide themselves and their schemes, but to God they appear as clothed in a garment of spider's web. God knows their secret machinations, and so do His people. When wicked men are trying secretly to hatch a viper, and think that no one knows what they are doing, somebody will step on the egg and reveal what is inside before the scheme is fully hatched. An example of this is Haman's attempt on the life of God's people, as revealed in the Book of Esther.

7. To what do their feet run? For what purpose do they make haste? What is said of their thoughts and of their paths? Verse 7.

8. Of what are they ignorant? What is not found in their goings? What do those not know who walk in crooked paths? Verse 8.

9. What is said of judgment and justice? For what do they wait? What is the result? Verse 9.

Note.—Thus far in the chapter God has spoken. Now the people speak. Verses 9-14. Instead of proclaiming their own righteousness as in chapter 58:3, they admit that the accusations against them are justified.

"Therefore," that is, because of the sins mentioned in verses 1-8.

"Judgment," "justice." The American Revised Version has "justice" and "righteousness."

"Wait for light." It is useless for anyone to wait for light so long as he has pleasure in iniquity.

10. What comparison is made with the blind? When do they stumble? To what are they likened? Verse 10.

11. What two illustrations

are here used? For what two things are they said to look? Verse 11.

12. What has been multiplied? What is done by our sins? What is said of our iniquities and transgressions? Verse 12.

Note.—"Our sins testify." What a tremendous statement! Sin does not exist apart from personality. It exists only as it is committed by, and belongs to, some one. Lies, envy, vice, impurity, hatred, greed, pride. What a company! How repulsive! Yet these are the companions we choose; and after we have played with them, entertained them, loved them, they turn around and testify against us. It is not the sins of which we are unaware that will condemn us. It is the sins we know. We do not need more light, but more life, more power.

13. Name the seven sins mentioned in this verse. Verse 13.

14. What is said of judgment and justice? What has happened to truth? What can equity not do? Verse 14.

Note.—"Courts of justice are corrupt. Rulers are actuated by desire for gain, and love of sensual pleasure. Intemperance has beclouded the faculties of many, so that Satan has almost complete control of them. Jurists are perverted, bribed, deluded. Drunkenness and revelry, passion, envy, dishonesty of every sort, are represented among those who administer the laws. 'Justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the streets, and equity can not enter'."—"The Great Controversy," p. 586.

15. What becomes of truth? Who makes himself a prey? How does this affect the Lord? Verse 15.

16. Why did the Lord wonder? What did His arm bring? What sustained Him? Verse 16.

Note.—"No man." (See Jer. 5:1.)

"No intercessor," such as Moses and Aaron. Num. 16:47, 48.

Though God found "no man" worthy of the name, yet He did not fail, but brought salvation and righteousness.

17. What did the Lord put on as breastplate and helmet? What was His garment and cloak? Verse 17.

Note.—God is here spoken of as a warrior going forth to battle for His people. He is arming Himself with His own attributes,—righteousness, salvation, vengeance, and zeal.

18. According to what will God recompense His enemies? Verse 18.

Note.—"According to their deeds." This is just. Rev. 22:12. The judgment here mentioned is not that of the last day, but rather such judgment as God metes out in this life to individuals and nations who transgress. The captivity of the children of Israel and the fall of Ninevah and Babylon are of this kind. This becomes clear from a study of the following verse.

19. What is the effect of God's judgments? What will God do when the enemy comes in like a flood? Verse 19.

Note.—"So," because of this. The result of God's punishing is that men will fear the Lord. That, however, is not the case in the last judgment, for that punishment is final, and will not result in men's fearing the Lord. Hence we conclude that this is not the judgment of the last day.

Read "The Great Controversy," p. 600, first paragraph.

20. To whom shall the Redeemer come? Verse 20.

Note.—God shall come in "fury to His adversaries," verse 18, but as a Redeemer to all that turn from transgression.

21. With whom is the covenant? What is said of God's Spirit and of His word? Verse 21.

Note.—"Thee" refers to the Redeemer of verse 20. The seed is the spiritual seed. Isa. 53:10.

"My Spirit," "My words." The Spirit is in the word. John 6:63. And that word is not to depart from our mouths "from henceforth and forever."

BAPTISM

Baptism is an expression of faith in the death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is an outward ordinance of initiation into the heavenly family. Christ's commission to the disciples was, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." As long as there is a soul to be converted, the great gospel commission lasts.

There is but one form of genuine baptism. John baptized "At Enon near to Salim, because there was much water there." John 3:23. While Philip was giving the eunuch a Bible study on Christ they came to the water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. It requires a certain amount of water to baptize after the order of Christ's baptism, for we are buried with Christ "in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operations of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Col. 2:12.

We die to sin by faith in

Christ: We confess that faith by a burial in the water. Then we arise to walk in newness of life. Christ is our example. As Christ literally died for us, so we die to sin; and as Christ rose from the dead, so we rise from the watery grave to walk in newness of life. This is Christian baptism. We are baptized by the administrator into the unity of the faith of Christ.

"There is one body, one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

—Eph. 4:4-6.

BEFORE RULERS AND KINGS

Jesus told His disciples the time would come when they would be brought before rulers and kings for His sake, and for a testimony against them. It was not a new or strange thing that was to befall disciples, but only a repetition of the experience of God's people in the past. Not a king, ruler or juryman will be without excuse in the day of judgment. If from lack of opportunity or interest they fail to hear salvation's story the Lord will permit them to see its power and triumphs as they administer their official duties.

When the three Hebrew captives were brought before King Nebuchadnezzar to be tried for worshiping the true God instead of the image set up by the king, he saw the mightiest men of his kingdom slain by the heat at the door of the furnace, while the three Christians were walking about in the fire unharmed. He said that he saw the Son of God with them, and acknowledged that God had delivered them. That manifestation of the power of God to deliver will witness against the king in the judgment if he has not been delivered from sin.

When Daniel was tried before King Darius for worshipping God contrary to the laws of the Medes and Persians, he was sentenced to death in the lions' den; but when the king came out in the morning and called for him, he awoke from peaceful slumber beside his friendly companions with shaggy mane, and answered, 'My God hath sent His angel, and shut the lions' mouths.' The king acknowledged before his kingdom that Daniel's God was the living God. This is abundant testimony to condemn the king in the judgment.

When the Saviour was born in Bethlehem's manger, Satan turned his warfare against Him, from His birth to His death he studied to destroy Him, and after death he tried to keep Him in the tomb; but the Son of God triumphed over Satan and came out of the tomb. After His resurrection when His disciples began to preach a risen Saviour, the enemy centered his wrath against them; and in fulfilment of Jesus' words, it soon became a common occurrence for them to be taken before courts to answer for their faith. Some of them gave their lives as a testimony against their persecutors. While the mock trial was being held for the first martyr, Stephen, the Spirit of God rested on him, and all in the court saw his face as it had been the face of an angel, and heard his prayer for his murderers while they stoned him. That triumphant death will be a testimony against all who witnessed it.

When King Herod put Peter in prison, intending to bring him out for execution later, the Lord sent an angel to open the doors and loose the chains from his wrists. They led him out while the guards were on duty. Herod commanded the guards to be killed, then abandoned his prisoner and left the country.

When Paul and Silas were taken before magistrates, beaten and put in jail, the Lord sent an earthquake to open the doors

and let them out. The magistrates were so convinced that they sent to tell them to depart and go in peace. While we have no evidence the magistrates accepted their prisoners' God, the jailer and his family were converted and baptized, rejoicing in the Lord. Again, when Paul was answering before Agrippa, Agrippa said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." His own words will witness against him in the judgment. And again, when Paul was a prisoner in Caesar's court, he wrote of the saints of Caesar's household, showing that his prison life had borne fruit.

If we turn from sacred to profane history, the numbers who have been brought before courts and rulers for their faith would outnumber the armies of the recent war, and the blood of martyrs will witness against their persecutors in the last day.

The controversy between good and evil is still on. If we are called before courts to answer for our faith, and we, like Paul, can offer to God a jailer's household, or a church from Caesar's courts as the fruits of our testimony, shall we not rejoice as did Paul, that we are worthy to suffer for Christ's sake?

Every man needs a friend. No man can live alone. He must have companionship, or life would be a dreary solitude. But it must be a true friend; a false friend is worse than none. The true friend is one who sees things as they are, who perceives the weaknesses of his most intimate companion, but who bears with his infirmities for the sake of all in him that is good. The divine Friend may be ours if we but return His affection. We can obtain His friendship by giving Him our own; and this we are to prove by simple trust and obedience.—Henry M. Field.

The ethical teaching of the Bible is not a whit less lofty than its spiritual, and many a thinker who repudiates the theology, welcomes its morality.—Rousseau.

There are seasons when to be still demands immeasurably higher strength than to act. Composure is often the highest result of power.