

each month on report blanks, also supplied free from this office; (4) all such are requested to use the printed Colporteur envelopes supplied free, or if temporarily out of these to use another envelope, writing on the lower left corner the words, "Colporteur Department." Others than active Colporteurs will please not use these envelopes. Those selling DAWNS or STUDIES at odd times, purchasing not over 25 books at a time by mail or express at rates usually given on page 2 of TOWER need no assignment and will be hereafter known as "Sharp Shooters."

We are sure that all the dear friends will be glad to assist in any manner, and a compliance with these suggestions will be one way of assisting the office force, which, with the increase of orders, is kept exceedingly busy. The prospects for new Colporteurs and for a very widely extended field of service for the present year encourages us greatly, and we bid them all God speed!—all the dear co-laborers looking shortly for the reward and the "Well done" of our Redeemer.

VOL. XXVIII

ALLEGHENY, PA., FEBRUARY 1, 1907

No. 3

THE PASSOVER MEMORIAL, MARCH 28, 1907

The date for the observance of the Memorial of our Lord's "Last Supper" this year will be Thursday night (after 6 p. m.) March 28th. We trust that our readers in Asia, Africa, Australia and Alaska will get this notice in season

and celebrate in unison with us the great event which sealed the Abrahamic or "Everlasting Covenant" for us, and will seal the "New Covenant" for Israel and the whole world, shortly.

"LOVE AS BRETHREN"

1 PETER 3:8.

Love for the brethren is set forth in the Scriptures as one of the indisputable evidences of our having attained membership in the body of Christ. This love may be of varying degrees, but it must be ours in some degree if we are the Lord's, for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." (Rom. 8:9) But this flame of sacred love for the brethren kindled in our hearts is not sufficient; it must blaze, burn, and produce in us not merely a warmth of love but a consuming love—love which will not only overlook various weaknesses and imperfections in the brotherhood, and will carefully note every good quality, but love which is ready to lay down life on behalf of the brethren because they belong to Christ, because they are of his consecrated ones, however much they may need to strive against sin and weaknesses.

As we have previously pointed out, the Gospel message fails to attract many of the noblest, least-fallen members of the race, because they have a self-satisfied feeling, and do not realize their need of a Savior, but think of him as necessary only to the more degraded of the race. On the contrary, the less known, more depraved, realizing to some extent their miserable condition, are more likely than the others to respond to the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The sin-sick and heavy laden, therefore, constitute the majority of true believers. And in harmony with this we have the words of the Scripture that not many wise, not many noble, not many learned, not many great according to the flesh have been called of God to the privileges of his church, the elect class. Consequently when any of the more noble minded or better educated or more talented accept the Lord's grace, it becomes somewhat of a trial to them to find amongst those whom they must recognize as brethren (because of faith in Christ and desire for the higher things) some of the ignoble, whose company and fellowship according to the flesh they would have scorned. This is another reason why not many great, wise, learned and noble will not make their calling and election sure—many such will allow their fleshly instincts to govern, and repudiating the humblest member of the body of Christ they are to that extent repudiating the Head, who has accepted that member, and who demands of all who would be his members that they shall love one another as he loved them.

True, the Lord does not say that we should love all the brethren with the same degree or intensity of love: on the contrary, he showed by his own conduct that we may indeed more highly esteem those who have most of his spirit, those whose hearts are most in accord with the divine will. Thus our Lord, while he loved all of his disciples, had some special favorites, Peter, James and John. His special love for these was doubtless because of their special interest and zeal for him and for the cause he served. So, therefore, may we, followers in the footsteps of Jesus, have special love for all who are specially zealous and true hearted. But this love ignores wealth, education, earthly standing—ignores the flesh and takes cognizance of the spirit, the will, the heart.

Tested by this love for the brethren, many who had a loving respect for the Lord as their Redeemer have apparently hindered their own spiritual development, slackened in their race for the prize—running the risk of losing the great

reward because of their failure to come up to this divine requirement, "Love as brethren." The proper course for all such is to think of the matter soberly from the Scriptural standpoint, and to decide that the humility requisite to an acceptance of some of the naturally less noble is undoubtedly a necessary element of character for them to develop. Amongst the fruits of the spirit the Apostle names meekness. The unmeek, the proud, are not in the condition of heart for the kingdom; and the higher stations of life, intellectually, morally and socially, are unfavorable to meekness, humility and long suffering with the weaknesses and frailties of others. We see, then, that while the weaker brethren, the naturally more impaired, have more to struggle against, more to overcome in one sense of the word, the others of more noble birth and talents have a harder battle along other lines. Let both classes be encouraged, for although the lessons they must learn are considerably different, the results to be obtained are the same, and the instructor, the great Teacher, is the same. He is able to assist the ignoble to gradually overcome their natural meanness and depravity, and to war more and more a good warfare in his name and by his assistance; and he is likewise able to assist the more noble minded to exercise patience, sympathy, toward the less reputable. They have an illustration in himself: he who was rich in every sense of the word and beyond all compare, perfect in every element of character, talented, noble—he for our sakes became poor, he humbled himself on our behalf, he took the bondman's place, he suffered in our room and stead, he died the just for the unjust. He has therefore set us an example that we may walk in his steps, and the more nobility we may have naturally the more readily we shall be able to do this, and to appreciate and exercise the fruits of the Spirit, and grow up more and more in accord, in sympathy, in likeness to him.

"LOVE YOUR ENEMIES"

There is a difference between the injunction to love as brethren and to lay down our lives for the brethren. Whatever we may do for any member of the body of Christ, for any consecrated believer, the Lord tells us he will esteem as though it were done unto him. Hence as it would be our duty and our privilege and our joy to lay down our lives in the service of the Lord, we must attain to such a love for the brethren, because they are his, that we will delight to lay down our lives for them as a means of demonstrating to the Lord our loyalty to him and his cause. This does not necessarily mean the laying down of physical strength and health and life in the physical services and ministries to the brethren, though these may be and are in many instances very profitable. It is not according to the flesh that the Lord's followers are brethren but according to the spirit, and hence the injunction to lay down our lives for the brethren would more particularly signify the laying down of our physical health or strength, knowledge, talents and means in the service of the spiritual interests of the Lord's people. As for instance, in the preaching of the Truth, if there be sacrifices or self-denials, loss of strength, etc., in connection with this service, it is the laying down of that much of one's life for the brethren, for the fellow-members of the body of Christ.

These brethren for whom we are to lay down our lives

are not merely those who are with us in fellowship of spirit, in the enjoyment of Present Truth. Perhaps we may have fewer opportunities for laying down our lives for such than for other brethren. For instance, there are brethren, true believers in the Lord, truly consecrated to him, who are yet in Babylon—in bondage, in darkness. These especially need that we should devote some of our time or influence or means for their aid, for their deliverance. True, the Lord himself could deliver them, because all things are in his power, including all the gold and silver and the cattle upon a thousand hills. But he has graciously left opportunities for us, that we may use the time, talents and means put within our control and which we have consecrated to his service. How much it would be to our disadvantage were we so situated that we had no opportunities for exercising these talents in the service of our King; how much we would lose of the joys of the service and sacrifice; how much we would miss of the spiritual exercise and the growth which this exercise assures. God, therefore, has left open before us doors of opportunity for service to the brethren, and the degree of our love for the brethren is measured in his sight by the zeal with which we endeavor to use the talents in our control. Let this thought of our love, zeal and devotion for the brethren, which testify to the Lord our love and zeal for himself nerve us to greater energy and faithfulness in his joyful service.

We remarked above that loving as brethren is a different matter. As we grow in grace and knowledge—as the love that is of God, that is inspired by his spirit, grows in our hearts and fills us, being “shed abroad in our hearts” (Rom. 5:5)—we are led to still wider love—beyond the household of faith, for whom we delight to lay down our lives. We learn to love all mankind, yea, even those who misunderstand us and are therefore our enemies—we learn to love all these as brethren. Not as brethren in Christ—that is a very

special, very dear relationship—but we learn to love them as brethren of the one family of Adam, redeemed by Jesus and hence by purchase the family of the second Adam.

As we grow in grace and knowledge we are able more clearly day by day, year by year, to appreciate the fact that the whole world was born under sin and are children of wrath, blinded by ignorance and superstition, mentally and physically unbalanced through the fall, and really in a terrible state, as the Apostle declares, a “groaning creation.” In proportion as we are able to take God’s standpoint in looking at the poor, fallen world, we are able to sympathize with them, even as the Scriptures declare that God looked down and beheld the groans of the prisoners—prisoners of sin, in captivity to death, going down to the tomb. (Psa. 102:19, 20.) We realize that they were born in sin, shapen in iniquity, that in sin their mothers conceived them—that in addition to this their associations with evil have all tended to drag them downward, and that, furthermore, Satan the great adversary, a wily foe to our race, is continually exerting his powers to blind the minds of their understanding and to misrepresent the divine character and plan.

With all this before our minds, what sympathy it gives us for our brothers according to the flesh, sinners, strangers, aliens, foreigners, yet redeemed, and in God’s gracious plan *en route* for the glorious blessings of the Millennial age. We say to ourselves, If God so loved these, if Christ died for them as well as for us, why should not we be very merciful, very compassionate, very sympathetic with them, and do all in our power to assist them out of darkness into God’s marvellous light, out of the ways of sin into the ways of righteousness, out of bondage to Satan into the liberty where-with God has made us free—the liberty of the sons of God, which he has promised shall be available to all peoples, kindreds, nations and tongues in the sweet by and by.

THE LESSON OF THE FLOOD

Genesis 8:1-16.—FEBRUARY 3.

Golden Text—“The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.”—Psa. 37:39.

Before seeking the lesson of the flood it is appropriate that we inquire, Was there a flood? The answer of the oldest histories attest the fact that there was. The Bible record itself we may estimate as one of the oldest, if not the original, of these histories, for reliance cannot be placed upon the dates assigned by scientists to the baked clay tablets found in the ruins of Nineveh. In their endeavor to find something older than the Bible, from which they claim the Bible account was made up, they add thousands of years to the antiquity of the flood, and thus quite disagree with the Bible records, which we hold are in nowise invalidated by their guessing. The genealogy from Noah to Abraham and Moses is clearly set forth, with a directness not even imitated in the Babylonian records.

The Apostle forewarns us that the wisdom of the world is foolishness to God, even as the wisdom and plan and revelations of God are foolishness to these “wise men.” In their efforts to disprove the faith of Jews and Christians—in their endeavor to ignore all divine revelation and, if possible, to ignore a personal Creator, they make an attack upon the book of Genesis, affecting to be able to distinguish the interweaving of two different accounts, assuming that if this were true the credibility of the Scriptures would be impaired, and that the world would be obliged to reject the thought of a divinely inspired account and to accept as scientific truth the conjectures of these “wise men.” On this subject we quote from Reverend Peloubet, D. D. He says:—

“The contradictions or criticisms are from those who not only see two narratives, but take for granted that each one is the whole. The Babylonian traditions of the deluge, which many critics regard as the source of the Bible account, contain the combined narrative. There are almost universal traditions of a flood, with great similarity of details. The most important of these is the Chaldean account, written on clay tablets found among the ruins of Nineveh and now in the British Museum. There is nothing in geology to discredit the story of the deluge, but much to confirm the fact.”

On this subject another writer, LeNormant, says:—

“The account of the deluge is a universal tradition in all branches of the human family, with the sole exception of the black race. And a tradition everywhere so exact and so concordant cannot possibly be referred to an imaginary myth. . . . It must be the reminiscence of an actual and terrible event . . . near to the primitive cradle of mankind, and previous to the separation of the families from whom the principal races were to descend.”

Professor Willis J. Beecher, D. D., on this subject, says:—
“Whatever inspiration one holds that they have must be predicated of the Scriptures rather than of the sources. It is the Scriptures in their present form that have won their way to universal acceptance as a great literature. . . . The literary excellence of the passage is due to the authors who put the Scriptures in their present form. As for the alleged contradictions, they do not exist.”

In reply to the criticism that one part of the account mentions the fact that seven pairs of clean animals were preserved and another verse relates that the animals went in two and two, Professor Beecher remarks properly that, “The statement that all the animals went in by pairs is entirely consistent with the statement that some of them went in by sevens.”

THE EXTENT OF THE DELUGE

We have discussed this matter in *SCRIPTURE STUDIES*, Vol. VI, chapter 1, but here give a quotation from Peloubet. He says:—

“It is the opinion of almost all, even the most conservative, that the deluge was limited in extent. ‘Earth’ is frequently used where it must mean the land, the ‘region,’ where men existed. When the account says that ‘all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered’ by the waters of the flood, and that ‘every living substance was destroyed,’ a reasonable interpretation in accordance with our own knowledge of the frequent use of language in literature—often exemplified in the Bible itself—would regard it as from the standpoint of the observer, and not necessarily imply that the total earth was covered, but only the regions known to man and inhabited by man. Thus, when the Savior said that the Queen of Sheba came from the uttermost parts of the earth, and the Acts report that in Jerusalem at Pentecost were people ‘out of every nation under heaven,’ they would not be proved untruthful nor even inexact if land should be found further away than Sheba or a tribe that was not represented at Pentecost.”

THE PREPARATION OF THE ARK

Some skeptics have made sport of the Scriptural record of the size of the Ark, and again of the Bible’s declaration that up to the time of the flood there had been no rain on the earth—that vegetation was sustained by a mist that arose. (Gen. 2:6) The latter objection we have answered quite at length in *SCRIPTURE STUDIES*, Vol. VI, chapter 1,

showing that the waters of the deluge up to that time had constituted a heavy film or envelope which encased the earth, and which by divine arrangement broke and descended upon the world partly in heavy rain and partly by a great flood from the two poles. As for the objections to the size and proportions of the Ark we quote the following:—

"Modern vessels, being built for swift sailing, are much longer in proportion to their width than was the Ark. The Ark was of three stories, built of gopher wood, probably cypress, a resinous fir. It was made water tight by covering it with bitumen (asphalt), which abounded in that region as well as around the Dead Sea. Around it, close to the roof for safety, an opening for light and ventilation, one cubit high, ran around the four sides, interrupted by beams or poles supporting the roof. Rooms, literally nests or cells, were made in three tiers for the accommodation of the animals. They would strengthen the whole structure. There was a single door. The dimensions given of the Ark, compared with our large modern ships, are:—

	LENGTH	WIDTH	HEIGHT
The Ark	300 cu., 450 ft.	50 cu., 75 ft.	30 cu., 45 ft.
Wilhelm der Grosse.	648 ft.	65 ft.	45 ft.
Great Eastern	680 ft.	82.5 ft.	58 ft.

"Geike writes: 'In the beginning of the seventeenth century, says J. D. Michaelis, a ship was built with a round hull, after the proportions given in Genesis 6, and it was found to the astonishment of all, that these proportions given in the oldest book in the world were precisely the most advantageous for safety and for stowage. Peter Jansen, a Mennonite, who lived at Hoorn in North Holland, was its builder; and his Ark differed from Noah's only in size. When launched it proved to be able to bear one-third more freight than other ships of the same measurement. The Dutch at once began to build others like it, calling them Noah's arks, and they ceased to be used only because they could not carry cannon.'"

THE PERIOD OF THE FLOOD

The very minute account of the flood seems to indicate that from the time Noah and his family and his sons' families and the beasts, birds, etc., entered the Ark and the raining began, until the time that the earth was totally dried, was a full year of 365 days. We read that Noah was 600 years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth (Gen. 7:6); and again, "It came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first month and the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth." (Gen. 8:13.) The record seems to be that it rained for forty days and forty nights (Gen. 7:12), and that the great fountains of waters were completely ruptured, broken up (the main body of the flood coming to the earth from the poles), so that the waters continued to increase or prevail upon the earth for 150 days after it ceased raining—a period of six months or more. Then not only was the rain restrained but the windows of heaven were stopped and the fountains of the deep.

Gradually the waters began to assuage until on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the Ark rested or grounded upon the Ararat mountains (Gen. 8:4), the waters continuing to decrease for another month, when surrounding and lower mountains were plainly visible; and forty days thereafter Noah—by way of determining how greatly the flood had subsided—sent forth a raven and a dove, which flew away and returned repeatedly until the dove returned to him with a green olive sprig, by which he knew that the waters were assuaged even to the valleys, and a week later the dove returned not to him, indicating that habitable conditions prevailed in the earth. Under the direction of the Lord, Noah and all under his care left the Ark on the twenty-seventh day of the second month; and since he entered the Ark on the seventeenth day of the second month, this would apparently imply a period of one year and ten days, but the difference is accounted for by the fact that the time is measured in lunar months.

THE CAUSE OF THE FLOOD

As already shown (Vol. VI., chap. 1), Noah's flood was a result of the breaking of the last one of the great rings which originally surrounded the earth, after the manner that we now see the rings of Saturn. But the time of the breaking of this envelope of water causing the deluge was so timed by divine wisdom and foreknowledge as to meet a crisis in the affairs of mankind. Had God foreseen that Adam would not have sinned, and that subsequent events respecting the race would not have transpired, he doubtless would have predestinated that the rain of waters should have occurred before creating man in the earth. The crisis is particularly explained Scripturally by the statement, "The earth was corrupt before God and the earth was filled with violence."

(Gen. 6:11) We naturally and properly inquire how this could be, since God had created man in his own image and likeness?

The answer Scripturally given is that the sin of disobedience was the start and that the blemish extended to all of Adam's race, of whom it is declared that they "were born in sin, shapen in iniquity." (Psa. 51:5) But more than this, the record is that the violence caused by human deflection was accentuated from an outside source—the angels, the "sons of God," who, singing together in the morning of creation, had been given a supervisory work to do in respect to mankind. But the example of sin and degradation proved to be contagious, so that, as the apostles Peter and Jude describe, some of those angels left, abandoned, their first estate—their angelic estate—and assuming human organizations, which they had been privileged to do for the purpose of benefiting and assisting mankind, they misused those bodies and preferred to be men rather than to be angels, and, as the account in Genesis 6:1-5 shows, these angels in their assumed human bodies had improper intercourse with humanity.—2 Pet. 2:4; Judge 6.

Those "sons of God" saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took them wives of all that they chose. As a result giants were born to them, "mighty men," "men of renown." The intimation is that these of illegitimate birth—contrary to divine arrangement and order—were far superior to the race of Adam, which by the time, centuries after the fall, were considerably degraded. The race of Adam were not matches at all for these giants and renowned ones, who both intellectually and physically were their superiors and rules them ruthlessly and filled the earth with violence. How widespread was this corruption of the race by improper intercourse with the sons of God is shown by two statements: first, "All flesh had corrupted his way;" and again, "Noah only have I found perfect," not corrupted by these improper practices. This probably included Noah's family as well as himself, they being under his influence and direction.

This accounts to us for the utter destruction of the human race. It was no longer of purely Adamic stock, as God had designed; it was unfit, not proper for his further use in connection with the divine plans, except Noah and his family. Nor could Noah's preaching on the subject influence his relatives, friends and neighbors; they were so thoroughly ensnared and under the influence of the nephilim (giants), "mighty men," that they scoffed at Noah and his work and his preaching righteousness instead of repenting. The result was their taking away in death through the flood and the sparing only of Noah and his family, who were "perfect in their generation"—not impaired, not blemished, not commingled with the seed of angels, but of purely Adamic stock—to perpetuate the human race and carry out the divine purpose in its creation.

The redemption of Adam and his race by our Lord's sacrifice, and the securing thereby of an opportunity for their resurrection to perfection, eternal life, that was lost in Adam, in no sense of the word affects those "giants" of renown, for they were illegitimate. Their life came not through father Adam, and hence was not redeemed by Christ. They were an unlawful and in every way illegitimate race, and are hopelessly extinct.

THE LESSON OF THE FLOOD TO US

Our Lord Jesus calls our attention to the flood and the incidents connected therewith, and clearly intimates some parallel in the end of this Gospel age, describing which he says, "As it was in the days of Noah, they were eating and drinking, planting and building, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away, even thus shall it be in the coming [parousia] of the Son of Man." True, our Lord does not say that the similarity will be in the wickedness nor in the taking away, but merely in the knowing not of the time. However, he does intimate that some great catastrophe or calamity is to be expected in the end of this age which in some sense or degree will correspond to the calamity in the days of Noah. Turning to the Epistle of Peter (1 Pet. 3:20, 21) we find there a reference to Noah, and the suggestion that Noah and his family saved in that flood typified or represented the Gospel church saved in the flood or calamity which is about to overwhelm the world. This seems a further corroboration of our Lord's intimations and becomes the more impressive, especially as Peter is describing the incidents connected with the ending of this age and the inauguration of this new dispensation, just as did Jesus in his reference to Noah's day. Peter says that the Ark salvation "was a like figure whereunto baptism doth now save us." What is the figure? We reply that the flood of water which there submerged the world meant the death of the world, while Noah

and his family although submerged in the same water were hidden in the Ark, and thus by the Ark their lives were spared. Similarly here we who are baptized into Christ, who become members of his body, enter the Ark of safety, although we are baptized into his death according to the flesh, are raised or saved, and on the other side the flood, on the other side the great calamity of death, in the new dispensation, in the "new earth" which the Scriptures describe, we shall live and be the representatives of God in establishing the new order of things. It is in harmony with this that the Scriptures represent Jesus as the Father of the everlasting age—the Life-Giver to all who will ever attain life eternal. All lost their lives through disobedience, through sin; our Lord Jesus paid the ransom price redeemed us with his own precious life, and proposes to succor, to give life to as many as will obey him. The whole period of the Millennial age is apportioned to this opportunity, and we who now accept of his grace are to be made participants with him in that glorious work—as the bride, the Lamb's wife.

GIANTS IN THESE DAYS ALSO

St. Peter intimates that as a flood of waters destroyed the human family in Noah's day, so fire will destroy in the end of this age. Elsewhere we have seen that the fire will be on a higher plane—symbolical fire or destruction—a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation, in the which not only the heavens of religious authority and power shall pass away with a great commotion, a fire, but the earth also (the present social structure, financial, political, social) shall melt with fervent heat—the various elements, such as the labor element, the capitalistic element, the political element, the religious element, shall melt in the fervency of the heat and passion and discord of that time.

We remember Zephaniah's description of the same great event when, after telling that the whole earth will be devoured with the fire of God's jealousy, he adds, "Then will I turn unto the people a pure message that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent." (Zeph. 3:8, 9) Thus we are shown that the fire which shall devour the whole earth will not be a literal one, but the people will be left, though the social structure will be entirely consumed, and that then the Lord will give unto the people his message in its purity. The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in its beams, and the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the great deep.—Mal. 4:2; Isa. 11:9.

It was the improper blending of spiritual and natural matters that brought to pass the giants of olden times, through whom came the violence in the earth preceding the cataclysm of the deluge. Is it remarkable that we find a correspondency in our time? Have we not giants today—of renown—of almost illimitable power amongst men? Are not these what are termed the "trusts" and financial princes of the earth, financially strong beyond any dream of the past? Is it not through the operation of these that the great time of trouble and violence is coming upon the world? Surely the picture is this precisely.

Now, then, in what sense were these giant corporations and

trusts and massive fortunes developed? Are they of heathen origin? O, no! The heathen never dreamed of such things, never imagined the might and power over men which is in the grasp of these institutions. The heathen themselves indeed suffer from these very giants, who are using the machinery of government in Germany, Great Britain, Belgium, France and elsewhere to training their hands to increase their power and their revenues by the coercion of the heathen peoples, as in South Africa and elsewhere, for filthy lucre's sake, for the increase of the strength of the giants. Do not these giants really manage the wars and rule the kingdoms of earth? Surely it is so. But if not of natural or heathen origin whence came these giants? We answer that they are the offspring of a misdirected spiritual energy. The spirit of the Lord operating in his consecrated people has exercised an enlightening influence all around them, amounting to what is known as present-day civilization. The majority of those thus civilized are far from being truly Christianized; nevertheless the enlightenment which they have comes, proceeds, from Christianity.

It is this enlightenment, improperly received and improperly exercised in the world, that has begotten the spirit of selfishness, which has reached its development and maturity in these giants. The whole earth will shortly be in their power, in their grasp, unless the Lord in his providence shall permit some great calamity to overthrow present institutions. This he tells us he is about to do. He is about to permit the "wrath of man to praise him," to work the overthrow, to enkindle the fire between capital and labor, between the giants and those who are more and more coming under their pressure and control—to wage a battle to the death, which will really mean the perishing of our civil, religious, political, social, financial institutions of this present time, in the great time of fire and trouble—in anarchy.

Who will be saved in this time? Who will survive this storm? The Word of the Lord to his consecrated followers is, "Watch ye, therefore, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape those things coming upon the earth and to stand before the Son of man." We are to watch that we may not fall into this general trouble and snare that is coming upon the whole world to try the hearts of men, to run deep the ploughshare of trouble which eventually, under the new dispensation, shall be a blessing, but which in the present time will be only a most terrible trouble. Thank God that there is a rainbow promised, yea, a rainbow that is seen by those who have the eye of faith and look upon matters through the Word of God. The rainbow is the divine promise that never more shall there be such a great calamity upon the world, that with this calamity will be introduced the kingdom of God's dear Son, and that never again shall the world be left, neither to fallen man nor to demons of the prince of this world nor to the kingdoms of this world, but he who redeemed the world shall be its Lord and King, and the dominion shall not be given to other people nor left to others; but when Messiah shall have conquered and put down all insubordination, and everything contrary to the divine will, then the kingdom shall be delivered to God, even the Father, that he may be all in all.

"THE GIFTS AND CALLINGS OF GOD"

Genesis 12:1-8.—FEBRUARY 10.

Golden Text—"I will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing."

Our lesson relates to the call of Abram (high father), whom God renamed Abraham (father of a multitude), although indirectly the special point of the lesson refers to the calling of Abraham's seed, natural and spiritual, and the divine bestowments to them, constituting them the centers of hope to the world of mankind. Already they have been greatly used of the Lord, but the Scriptures indicate that their influence and usefulness toward their fellow-creatures have only begun, and will reach their glorious culmination during the Millennium. Abraham's early life was spent at Ur of Chaldaea, the ruins of which (now known by the name of Mugheir) are being excavated and explored. They indicate that it was once a seat of business activity, and Professor Sayce says that the name Abram (Abu-Ramu) is found on early Babylonian contract tablets, and some tablets recently unearthed at Ur contain part of the story of the deluge. Scholars are hoping to find in these ruins the Babylonian library, containing the original tablets from which the narratives of the creation and flood were copied for the library at Nineveh.

We are to remember that Abraham was born two years after the death of Noah, and that Noah's father, Lamech, was born fifty-six years before Adam's death—hence the

chain of tradition had few links up to Abraham's time, even though the period was nearly 2,000 years long. It is not strange, therefore, that the story of the creation and of the flood are found in the land of the Chaldeans at a date prior to Moses' writings—the Pentateuch. It should always be borne in mind that the Scriptures make no claim that Moses was present at the time of creation or at the time of the flood, nor that the writer was a witness of the other incidents recorded in Genesis. Moses was merely the recorder who, under the same divine supervision and direction that enabled him to be the Law-giver and commander of typical Israel, was used as God's amanuensis in recording for our benefit such events in the lives of individuals, as well as their chronologies, as would help to perfect the chain of previous history. We should remember, also, that the records of God's doings would be appreciated by those who are loyal to him, amongst whom must be included Noah and his family, and that Abraham, as we have seen, was directly in this line—a scion of one of the best branches of Noah's immediate posterity.

THE REIGN OF SIN

The indications are that idolatry and immorality had taken firm hold upon that branch of Noah's family (Shem)

of which Abraham came, and which is recognized to this day as the highest and noblest branch and the one most favored by the Almighty. The assumption is not unreasonable, therefore, that Abraham's father, Terah, and his two elder brothers, Haran and Nahor, were considerably influenced by this spirit of idolatry. The record is that God first communicated with Abram while he resided at Ur, indicating the propriety of a change of residence to Canaan. Apparently he had considerable influence with the family, so that they all removed from Ur, a distance of about six hundred miles northward to Haran, possibly a place of their own establishment and named after Terah's eldest son, who died about that time.

Whether it was God's revelation to Abraham or the death of his son Haran that influenced Terah and the family to remove from Ur we cannot know—possibly both incidents had their influence. However, it was not God's design to call Abraham's entire family but merely himself. Hence, apparently with the Lord's approval, Abraham remained in Haran for five years, until the death of Terah. Then, with his share of the property, with his wife Sarah, who was also his half sister, and with Lot, the son of his deceased brother Haran, Abraham carried out the divine arrangement by removing from Haran into the land of Canaan, a journey of about three hundred miles more. The clear intimation of the Scriptures is that in this matter Abraham acted in harmony with God's directions, along the lines of faith and obedience. We may infer that this obedience was rendered at the cost of earthly name and fame, and that Abraham must have been out of record with the idolatry and licentiousness and immorality of his native place, as well as full of faith in God and fully in harmony with the divine principles of righteousness, and glad to be obedient to the Lord.

ABRAHAM WAS WEALTHY AND POWERFUL

A lesson for us here is, God first, righteousness first—before earthly prosperity, especially that which might be obtained through evil methods or other fellowship with the unrighteous. True, as the Apostle says, to have no dealings with the unrighteous might imply that we need to go out of the world, since unrighteousness is so prevalent; but as in Abraham's case the Lord's invitation to us is to separate ourselves as much as possible from people and circumstances and conditions whose tendency is downward toward sin, and to affiliate ourselves as much as possible with those influences which would help us to a closer walk with God. Although Abraham had no children he had a large number of persons under his care. These were his servants, and how numerous they were may be judged from the fact that a little later Abraham was able to muster 318 fighting men amongst them—the company who went after those who had taken Lot's property. This number of fighting men would imply a considerably larger number in the aggregate. It would appear, therefore, that Abraham was a very powerful sheik or prince of that time, the number of whose flocks and herds, requiring so many servants, must have been large indeed. No wonder his servant was able to tell Rebecca that Abraham was very rich. Much of those riches, of course, was gained in Canaan, but a considerable portion of it evidently went with him into Canaan.

FURTHER SEPARATION FROM IDOLATRY

When Abraham and his company had come into the land of Canaan under the Lord's direction, he settled for awhile at Shechem, that portion subsequently known as Samaria. But he did not remain there long, for, as we read, the Canaanite was still in the land. It was doubtless to be free from the immoral influences of the Canaanites, and to have his people separated from these, that Abraham removed subsequently to the mountainous country near Bethel. There he established his home, there he reared an altar to the Lord and prayed. Would that each head of a family were thus careful to look out for the interests of those under his charge, that these interests should be advantageous to their welfare everywhere! Would that more could realize how indispensable it is to have an altar to the Lord in their home, where the prayer incense would ascend to the Father through the merit of the Redeemer. The true altar not having been provided of the Lord, Abraham and others of his time reared altars of stone for use in the Lord's worship. But we have the golden altar of the Holy, and are permitted to offer thereupon, as members of the body of the great High Priest, under him as our Head and glorious representative.

THE DIVINE PROMISE

Whenever God calls any for any purpose he sets before the called ones an object, a reason, a motive, and this he

did with Abraham. He not only called him out of his own country to a life of separation from sin, but he attached to that a great promise, which had a mighty influence upon the mind of Abraham and his children and all the Jewish nation, and since then upon all the spiritual Israelites, the Israelites indeed. The promise was that not only would Abraham receive a blessing, but that in and through him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed." This must have seemed a very obscure promise to Abraham, and his obedience to it was the more remarkable, so that he is held up to be as an example of a proper unquestioning faith in the word and wisdom of the Almighty—"Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." He might have objected that he could do more good in Ur, where wickedness prevailed, than he could accomplish in the mountains of Palestine, where he and others under his godly influence were comparatively separate from others of the world. His faith was shown in that he did not attempt to argue the matter with the Lord, but obeyed implicitly. So it is with many of God's spiritual Israel of the present time: the call of the Lord comes, and his direction of word and providence seems perhaps from our standpoint to be not in harmony with our anticipations respecting his will and the attainment of his purposes.

And alas! how few of nominal spiritual Israel take Abraham's course and get Abraham's blessing. The obedient are only "a little flock," to whom it will be the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom and its great work of blessing all the families of the earth. Many of them are inclined to resist God's providences, not exercising a sufficiency of faith. Some determine that it is their mission to convert the world; others that they must engage in political reform; others that their efforts must be used in temperance work, thus bringing about a reign of righteousness. We are not disputing that all of these are good works, and that good motives are behind them; but we do claim that many of the dear friends who are zealous in these ways are not sufficiently attentive to the Word of God to be obedient to it. As a consequence, many of them are disappointed and numbers are sidetracked.

How many temperance workers have become discouraged at the paucity of results they are able to attain! How many interested in foreign missions are disappointed that, whereas the number of heathen a century ago was estimated at about 600,000,000, statistics today tell us that they now number 1,200,000,000. We appreciate, and feel sure that God appreciates, their good intentions, their good endeavors; yet they are liable to make shipwreck of their faith because not heeding with sufficient care the voice of him that speaketh from heaven and who directs us,—

"THIS IS THE WAY, WALK YE IN IT"

The spiritual lesson in the story of Abraham is that God is pleased to honor faith, and that the experiences of life which he permits to come to the faithful are intended for their development in faith and in the graces of the holy Spirit, and that these all are unitedly a preparation for God's still greater work of the future.

Abraham was not sent as a missionary back to Haran or to Ur, nor indeed to the people who surrounded him. The Lord's message was, "Walk thou before me and be thou perfect." God, of course, knew that Abraham was actually imperfect, tainted by the fall, and this command, therefore, signified that his heart should be perfect—his will, his intentions, and his conduct as nearly as possible in harmony with God's perfect will. The Apostle Paul shows us that he was not justified on account of any righteousness of his own, for he puts Abraham with the list of ancient worthies who were justified not by the works of the Law but by faith, and who, because of their faith, "had this testimony that they pleased God." It was his faith that led Abraham into a strange country away from his kindred, because he trusted God; it was faith that enabled him to stand various tests by the way, including the command to offer up his son as a sacrifice, his only son, in whom centered all the promises.

It was his faith in the promise of God—that in a future time through his seed a reign of righteousness would be established in the earth—that led Abraham to look for that city [government] of sure foundation upon principles of righteousness—the heavenly city, the government or kingdom of God's dear Son, which is to put down all insubordination and bring everything into subjection to the divine will. The seed of Abraham, the elect church of this Gospel age, is to exercise divine power in the earth and cause every knee to bow and every tongue to confess; and after instituting a reign of righteousness and blessings thereby to all the families of the earth, is to deliver up the king-

dom, perfect and complete, to God, even the Father, at the close of the Millennial age. This was the promise made to Abraham, "In thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." And he was willing to waive his share in the governmental position and power of the present time under present adverse conditions, that he might have some share in the glorious Messianic Kingdom of the future.

"YE SHALL SEE ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB"

When Messiah's kingdom, itself invisible, shall establish a reign of righteousness in the earth, it will have amongst men visible representatives, "princes in the earth." (Psa. 45:16.) And we are assured that Abraham will be one of these, and will thus have to do actively, prominently, with the establishment of the reign of righteousness and the demonstrations of justice and mercy and love to the world of mankind, "to all the families of the earth." He is mentioned as one of this class in Hebrews 11:39, 40. At one time, in company with others, we surmised that Abraham would have been placed in the heavenly Kingdom of the spiritual class; but a more careful consideration of the matter shows us, to the contrary, that he belongs to the class of ancient worthies of whom the Apostle declares that God has provided some better thing for us than for them, although their blessing shall be a great one. Abraham, styled the father of the faithful, the Redeemer says, "rejoiced to see my day: and saw it and was glad." (John 8:56) By faith he saw the day of Christ, the Millennial day, the kingdom well founded; by faith he rejoiced in the glorious reign of righteousness then to be established.

But while this blessing is to come to the world through the seed of Abraham, the Scriptures indicate that a great change takes place by which the seed, the child of Abraham, Christ, becomes greater than Abraham, as it is written, "Instead of the fathers shall be the children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth." Abraham, instead of being viewed any longer as the father of Messiah, will be recognized as one of his children, perfect on the earthly plane and made a prince amongst men, to be used as an active agent of the glorified Christ in dispensing the blessings secured by the great redemptive sacrifice. Referring to the matter, our Lord points out the fact that these ancient worthies will be visible to men, but properly enough says not a word about himself and the apostles or any of the bride class being visible. The statement is, "Ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets." The fact that the still more notable ones in the kingdom are not referred to as seen is an evidence that they will not be seen by the world, and this comports with the Lord's statement to some in his day, "Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more." It agrees also with the declaration, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Only those changed from human to spirit nature, under the terms of the Lord's arrangement of this Gospel age, will be spirit beings, and they alone therefore will be able to see, discern, the Lord and other spirit beings.

"WHICH SEED IS CHRIST"

The Apostle points out to us most distinctly that the seed of Abraham according to the flesh was Jesus, our Lord, who is now of the flesh no more, having sacrificed it and received the begetting of the spirit to the new nature. He is now the glorified one, the Christ, Abraham's Lord and David's Lord. And the Apostle points out to us as a great mystery the fact that God during this Gospel age is selecting from amongst mankind some to be joint-heirs with Jesus in the Kingdom—to be members of the seed of Abraham. (Eph. 3:9; Acts 15:17; Rom. 8:17) We ask how could this be, since the Law Covenant was added, and since Jesus alone fulfilled the terms of the Law Covenant and ended all the hopes and prospects it contained? Surely no Jew preceded our Lord in the matter, and surely, since our Lord has finished his course, the offer of the Law Covenant is no longer open to a Jew, as it never was open to a Gentile. Where, then, is the prospect for either Jew or Gentile being joined with Christ, in joint-heirship with Christ in this Abrahamic Covenant?

We reply that we are accepted of the Lord, as the "bride of Christ," the "Lamb's wife." The church, composed in the beginning exclusively of Jews, and subsequently almost exclusively of Gentiles, is as a whole accepted by the Lord as his bride, and by becoming joined to him and by union or marriage with him these, whether Jews or Gentiles, are made his joint-heirs. This is the Apostle's clear statement of the matter, for after telling that Christ is the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16) he adds a word respecting the

church, his prospective bride, saying, "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:29) In the one figure we are accepted as members of the Lord's body, that is, when the Apostle says, "Ye brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise;" in another figure we are accepted as members of his bride.

THE WIFE MADE READY

As our Lord was tested in all points yet without sin, so all of these who are counted worthy to be his members must similarly stand the testing to demonstrate their character-likeness to him and their worthiness of a share in his glorious kingdom. Hence it does not surprise us that everywhere throughout the Scriptures appeals are made to the Lord's people, not so much respecting what they shall do for others as what they shall do for themselves and for each other. We are not opposing the thought of doing good unto all men as we have opportunity, but emphasizing the other thought that we are to do good "especially to the household of faith." We are to "build one another up in the most holy faith," we are to "lay down our lives for the brethren," we are to "comfort one another," "edify one another." In a word the bride, the Lamb's wife, is to "make herself ready"—not without the Bridegroom's supervision and assistance, but with it and as a part of it.

As the trial of faith was the most prominent feature of Abraham's testing, so it must needs be with us, his true children. It is the trial of your faith that is much more precious than gold, as the Apostle says, and he assures us that "without faith it is impossible to please God." For this reason it is required of those who now walk in the narrow way that they shall walk by faith and not by sight. When the time comes for the shining forth of the Sun of Righteousness and the scattering of the darkness and mystery that surrounds the divine character and word and the permission of evil, there will be plenty ready and able to walk by sight; but the Lord is now looking for the few, the little flock, able and willing to walk by faith, through evil report and good report, to trust him where they cannot trace him, and to demonstrate their loyalty by their faithfulness and their endurance even unto death. The trials of the present time upon the Gospel church are with a view to testing the character, with a view to determining who are worthy and who are unworthy to constitute the seed of Abraham, which God promised shall ultimately bless all the families of the earth.

SURE TO BOTH THE SEEDS

The Apostle declares that God promised not the blessing through the seeds of Abraham, as of many, but "in thy seed," as of one. We have already seen that this one seed is the Christ, but we now notice that while there are not many seeds there is another seed beside this Messianic class—a seed's seed, as it were. The Apostle clearly intimates this in his declaration respecting the Law and the Gospel, that the object was "that the promise might be sure to both the seeds," not only that which is according to the spirit, but also that which is according to the law. This was intimated also in the fact that a promise was made to Ishmael as well as to Isaac. But the promise to Ishmael proceeded through Isaac, the one seed of promise. Similarly the Lord's blessing on all the families of the earth must proceed through the one seed, which is Christ—the Messianic seed of Abraham.

St. Paul makes very clear that there is a double allotment of divine mercy and provision—one portion to the spiritual seed and another portion to the natural seed of Abraham. In Romans 11, where, after describing the rejection of the natural seed of Abraham and the acceptance of the spiritual seed, he points to the fact that at the end of this Gospel age the spiritual seed will be complete, and then he declares that the divine blessing shall go to the natural seed of Abraham again—to those who were once broken off, rejected and blinded because they were unable to realize and appreciate the spiritual part of the promise. For them then remains an earthly or natural part, and blessing will surely come to them, because God has already declared that "the Deliverer shall come out of Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob, because this is my covenant with them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the Gospel they were enemies for your sakes, but as touching the promises of God they are beloved for the fathers' sakes; for the gifts and callings of God are things not to be repented of."—Rom. 11:26-29.

After thus most clearly specifying that God's gifts and callings from the remote past included the restoration of

the Jews to divine favor at the close of the Gospel age, the Apostle proceeds to show how this blessing must come through the spiritual seed, saying, "They shall obtain mercy through your mercy"—through the mercy of the Gospel Church, the spiritual seed of Abraham, under Christ their Head.

"ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH"

The turning of God's blessing to Israel at the close of this Gospel age will include the exaltation to honorable service of the worthy ones of the past dispensation, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets—"princes in all the earth"—ensamples of perfect manhood, leaders of the people. But it will mean more than this, for the promise was not merely that through the seed of Abraham, spiritual, the natural seed of Abraham should be blessed, but "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Hence, as the Apostle points out, the Gospel church is a "first-fruits unto God of his creatures" in one sense, a first-fruits on a spirit plane, and natural Israel will be a first-fruits of his creatures on an earthly plane; and in proportion to their willingness, under the guidance of the ancient worthies, they may be helpful to all the families of the earth in spreading knowledge of the great Messiah and the rules and regulations of his kingdom, for the blessing and uplifting of all the families of the earth.

Mark how the Apostle declared that if the rejection of Israel meant a blessing to the Gentiles, will not the regathering of Israel signify life from the dead to the world in general. (Rom. 11:15) It surely will. In order for the seed of Abraham according to the flesh to realize the blessings God has promised, an awakening from the sleep of death will be necessary, since God is no respecter of persons. In a general sense it follows that these blessings which he has covenanted to give first to Israel, he is equally willing and able to give to all mankind in due time. O, how much of goodness and mercy God can crowd into a few words! How little Abraham was able to comprehend the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of divine blessing that was conferred upon him when the Lord said, "Because thou hast done this, in blessing I will bless thee and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed, and it shall be as the stars of heaven and the sand upon the seashore."

How little Abraham could have understood that the seed that was to be as the stars of heaven is the spiritual seed, and that the seed that shall be as the sand upon the seashore is the natural seed. In a word, not only those of fleshly Israel who accepted the blessings and favors of the kingdom, but humanity in general, all the families of the earth, will be privileged to become the seed of Abraham through faith and obedience, even as we of this Gospel age who are Gentiles have been privileged through faith and obedience to become joint-heirs in spiritual Israel with those Jews who were Israelites indeed at the first advent.

THE GOLDEN TEXT

God's promise to Abraham was abundantly fulfilled in his own person: it was fulfilled also in his natural seed and in his spiritual seed. Surely, of all, the latter is the most blessed. What more could God say to us or do for us than he has already said and done? Lifting us from the horrible pit and miry clay of sin and condemnation, he has placed our feet upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and put a new song in our mouths. Yea, more, he has adopted us into his family and made us heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."—1 Pet. 1:4, 5.

The declaration is added, "I will bless them that bless thee, and I will curse him that curseth thee." This does not refer to blessing by the lips or cursing by the lips merely, but rather appertains to conduct—he that does good to you, who favors you, I will favor; he that injures you I will permit to be injured. How this has been fulfilled in the case of the natural Jew, even in his outcast condition! Those nations which have maltreated the Jew have suffered, those which have treated him with kindness have been more or less blessed. And if we apply the same test of the spiritual seed of Abraham, does it not fit even better? Has there not come a blessing of the Lord to all those who have either said or done kindness to his true people, his faithful? and has not blight followed upon those who in any sense of the word have sought to do injury to the Lord's Anointed? "If God be for us who can be against us?"

THE DANGER OF COVETOUSNESS

Genesis 13:1-13.—FEBRUARY 17.

Golden Text—"Take heed and beware of covetousness."—Luke 12:15.

In our last lesson we left Abraham located at Bethel, where he had erected an altar to the Lord, indicating his continued reverence and his determination to accept the Lord's terms in all of his affairs. A famine in the land shortly after must have served to test the patriarch's faith. Was this the goodly Canaan, flowing with milk and honey? and would it be subject to drouths and famines? and if so, would it compare at all with the rich country of Ur of the Chaldees, whence he had come? Had he made a mistake? Was God as good as his word? Why was the famine permitted to be more disastrous to him than to the Canaanites, who were not a herding and shepherding people. Never questioning the Lord's wisdom, Abraham moved southward through the promised land and into Egypt, in whose rich lowlands of Goshen, well watered, there was usually an abundant pasturage—possibly, too, he made sale of some of his stock. We are not told that this visit to Egypt was contrary to the divine word or will, but the record does show that it brought Abraham into trying experiences. His wife Sarah was very beautiful, and, as he had surmised, the king was charmed with her and desired her for a wife. Here it was that Abraham showed a weakness in suggesting that Sarah should be known only as his sister—that her relationship as his wife should be kept secret, lest the king should kill Abraham in order to possess his wife. This is perhaps the only blemish we find in the history of Abraham. And doubtless the reproof administered by the human king for his lack of faith and lack of sincerity in the matter proved ultimately a great blessing to the patriarch; even as many a Christian has been made stronger through a realization of his blemishes.

How improper it would be for us to judge Abraham according to that one misstep, and how equally improper it would be to judge Christians in so harsh a manner. If he who is styled "the father of the faithful" on one occasion exhibited so great a lack of faith, yet profited by his rebuke and became stronger than ever and more than ever the "friend of God," what may we not hope from others who

have made some missteps? Not that we encourage such lapses from duty, but that we encourage those who have unwillingly stumbled to be not utterly cast down thereby, but to arise and take a more firm hold upon the hand of the Lord and to press with vigor on. Another lesson is in respect to the faithfulness of the Word of the Lord in portraying the weaknesses as well as the strong elements of character of those with whom it deals. In this respect it is not, like other histories and narratives, so arranged as to hide their blemishes and to disclose their virtues. The Bible sets forth matters very plainly, truthfully, in a manner that carries conviction respecting the honesty of the recorder and the faithfulness of the record.

"NONE RIGHTEOUS; NO, NOT ONE"

Perfection is a thing we cannot hope to find in any member of the human race. The Scriptures are clear upon this (Rom. 3:10), and when Jesus the Messiah is introduced it is especially pointed out that he was distinctly separate from the Adamic race—that his life came not from Adam but from the heavenly Father, and that, therefore, he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," suited to be the Redeemer of Adam and his race—able to give to God a ransom price. Respecting the race in general the poet has well said:—

"There is a fleck of rust on a flawless blade,
On the costly armour there is one;
There's a mole on the cheek of the lovely maid,
There are spots upon the sun."

While God sets before us the standard of perfection, saying, "Walk thou before me and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1); and again, "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48), it is nowhere intimated that it is possible for us while still in the flesh to attain to such perfection. On the contrary it is clearly set

forth in the Scriptures that the perfection that is possible to us is that of the heart, the mind, the will, the intent, which will insure the conduct of the mortal body being as nearly to this standard as possible. It is right that the standard before us should be a perfect one, even as we set for our children the writing lesson that is flawless, without expecting that they will be able to duplicate its perfection, but desiring that by observation of the proper standard they may approximate thereto better than if a low standard had been set. Besides, God could not set an imperfect standard: for him to do so would mean his agreement in a measure with sin.

When judging ourselves it is proper that we keep this perfect standard before us, and yet—lest we should become utterly discouraged, and faint by the way—we must remember that it was because of our inability to do perfectly that the ransom price of our Lord was provided at all. When criticising the imperfections and weaknesses of others through heredity we can but imperfectly judge, and it is well that we use great liberality—indeed we are forbidden to judge the motives of the heart, and are assured that God alone could properly do this. It is when we see evil fruits, and find the heart, the will, taking them up and assisting and endorsing and not denying them, that we may be sure of the wickedness of the person; but even then we are incompetent to be judges, and are not permitted to pass sentence or inflict penalty, but rather to say, "The Lord rebuke thee."—Jude 9.

Our lesson properly starts with the return of Abraham and his family, servants, flocks and herds, accompanied by his nephew Lot, who had separate interests. The record is that Abraham was very rich, literally heavy in cattle, in silver, and in gold. The statement is apparently made to indicate that the journey from Egypt back to Bethel was a slow one; it was referred to as journeys, as though there were frequent stops. Indeed we may well suppose that, with his faith in the promise of God—that his posterity would ultimately possess that entire land—Abraham was looking about with great interest upon this future inheritance, taking especial pleasure in the slow journeys. Returned to Bethel, his previous place of settlement, we find him again a worshiper, a sacrificer, presenting offerings to the Lord with prayers and thankfulness.

Fertile though the soil of Canaan was, the flocks and herds were numerous and required a great deal of room, and no doubt it was with difficulty that they were well watered; and since Lot had a separate establishment of his own, servants, flocks, herds, etc., it is not to be wondered at that some strife arose between the servants of Abraham and those of Lot. There is a lesson for all the Lord's people in the generous manner in which Abraham dealt with this quarrel. Pointing out the necessity for a separation, and that it was better to separate than to engender quarrels between their servants, which might ultimately culminate in a quarrel between themselves, Abraham gave Lot his choice of land. "Blessed are the peacemakers," said our Lord, and surely we have evidence here that Abraham was a man of peace and a peacemaker. Had Abraham been of a selfish spirit he would have made the choice, asserting his right by reason of seniority and the fact that the Lord had brought him thither and given the land to him, and that Lot was merely there by his sufferance and as his friend anyway, and hence should be satisfied with whatever portion would be assigned to him.

Abraham had faith in God that all things would work for his good, and that the land would ultimately be for his posterity. Thus at rest in his mind, selfishness found no room for lodgment, and the Lord overruled the matter in such a manner as to be for Abraham's ultimate welfare. This generous conduct on Abraham's part assures us that he had been similarly generous with his nephew before, and we remember the testimony of the Lord that "the liberal soul shall be made fat"; and again, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendereth to poverty." (Prov. 11:24, 25) All of the Lord's people, according to their circumstances and conditions, should be generous—not merely in earthly matters but especially in their hearts, in their minds, in their thoughts, benevolent and kindly.

LOT'S COVETOUS CHOICE

The journey into Egypt opened the eyes of Lot to the luxuries of life: so now, when he attempted to make a choice for a home separate from that of Abraham, he chose that which most nearly paralleled the richness of Egypt, namely, the valley of the Jordan near its mouth, and accordingly he pitched his tent toward Sodom—that is to say, he established his headquarters at Sodom, where he would have the luxuries of town life while the herdsmen and shepherds cared for his

flocks in the nearby green pastures. From a worldly standpoint Lot chose wisely, but from the true standpoint, in view of his highest interests, he made a bad choice. He should have considered the character of the people with whom he was about to dwell, their influence upon himself, his wife and daughters, for the record is that the people of Sodom were exceedingly wicked. Abraham would not have so chosen, but as he avoided Shechem and went apart by himself, so he would have gone again even had he chosen the Jordan valley for a pasturage. He would have established a separate village for himself and for his people, and not have led them into the temptations of Sodom.

We are not to think of Lot as a bad man, who took delight in the wickedness of Sodom and chose it on that account. The Scriptures, on the contrary, designate him as "righteous Lot," and tell us that he was "sore distressed" by the lascivious life of the wicked Sodomites, "for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." (2 Pet. 2:7, 8) What then was the failure or wickedness of Lot's character that led him to choose and to remain in this undesirable locality to his own discomfort and to the injury of his family? Apparently it was his worldly mindedness, probably his desire to please his wife and his daughters. We are not intimating that he should have ignored the proper opinions and desires of his family, but, giving these legitimate weight, he should have decided that their moral interests were far above all others and should have marked his course accordingly.

There are many amongst the Lord's people today who are much in the position of Lot. They do not in time take counsel of the Lord as to what they shall do, where they shall locate, but rather run to their own understanding, and yield to the wishes of those over whom the Lord has made them the responsible caretakers. They love their families, but not wisely; they do for them, but not to their best interests and eternal welfare. They are vexed from day to day by the wickedness around them, and yet they get themselves into that very position deliberately and intentionally. The lesson is that we should follow Abraham's course and not Lot's—we should think more of the eternal interests and less of the temporalities. We are not meaning to say that all who would train their families properly must live in the country and not in the city, for circumstances alter cases, and with many of us the Lord's work and our own spiritual advancement can be better served in the city than in the country. What we do urge is that all the Lord's true people should seek first, primarily, the will of the Lord, his righteousness, his service, the things that would make for their peace and their everlasting blessing, rather than the things of time and sense and ease and worldly pleasure.

"LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION"

Our Lord taught us to pray daily, "Abandon us not to temptation, but deliver us from the evil one," and probably the majority of the Lord's people offer the sense of this prayer daily. But how foolish to pray thus and not to watch to the same end—to escape the temptation! How foolish to pray for deliverance from a thing and then to walk deliberately into it! Yet this very evidently is the course of the majority of the Lord's people. And in proportion as this is so, in proportion as they do not seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, making it the paramount issue of life, they are laying themselves open to many trials, some of which the Apostle intimates may pierce them through with many sorrows. (1 Tim. 6:10.) Let us all resolve, that in the momentous affairs of life and in the little matters as well, we will decide our course not according to covetousness, which is sure to blind us to the true situation and to make us unwise as respects the highest interests, but let us on the contrary make our choice with an eye single to the glory of God and to the best interests of our families and of ourselves; and having so decided, let us with kindness and with love stand forth for the right after the manner of Abraham, and like him be generous in our avoidance of quarrels or in the settlement of those quarrels which have already arisen.

As a rule, quarrels in the family and in the church arise from selfishness and covetousness; and it is the privilege of those who are nearest to the Lord and most developed in his character-likeness to be the most generous in any quarrel. The majority of quarrels are over trifles, which can as well as not be compromised or yielded to; only in the case of principles may the Lord's people contend earnestly. And even then the contention should be in the spirit of love and benevolence—the spirit of willingness to yield to the other so far as personal preferences are concerned, but a firmness for the Word of the Lord and the principles of righteousness. In