

dency, no matter what it costs, no matter how precious, no matter how great a hold it may have upon the very tendrils of your life. Would it not be better to enter into life than to go into Gehenna fire, that is, destruction, the second death? Surely this is true. Having put our hands to the plow, having even become followers of Jesus, we must either go on and be accepted as conquerors, or must perish.

There will, of course, be none in the kingdom with but one eye, but the illustration is the same. If it should cost us the cutting off of some of our members, it would surely pay us to gain the eternal life in glory, even thus maimed, rather than to take the consequences of the second death, utter extinction. The lesson is that having begun as followers of Christ, and entered upon the contract and received a part of the reward, the holy Spirit, the divine favor, we cannot back out of the contract; we must go on to everlasting life or to everlasting death.

How careful the Lord's people should be not to stumble one another, even one of the least of the little ones who has accepted of Jesus and become his follower!—is the lesson. To illustrate it, Jesus suggested that any shepherd losing one of his sheep would leave all the others to go and seek that one;

and he rejoices specially at its recovery. So we, the followers of Jesus, should be careful not to stumble each other, but rather to remember that we are all sheep under the great Shepherd, our Heavenly Father, and the great Under Shepherd, our Heavenly Lord, and that he has the spirit of loving interest and care which would go after the straying sheep, and that we should have this same spirit; and possessing this spirit, we would be very careful indeed not to stumble or hinder even the least of the Lord's followers.

All the Lord's true followers are God's "little ones," and are subject to special divine supervision, represented in our text as angel care. The messengers who have guarded over the lives of God's saintly few always have access to the Heavenly Father's presence, to make known the necessities of those whom they represent, for divine power is ever on the alert for the protection of these. Oh, how blessed the privilege of being children of God. Oh, how wise to continue so little, so humble, so childlike, as to abide in his love, and to be enabled to learn the necessary lessons, and be ultimately received with Messiah in his kingdom honor and glory!

MORE ELDERS—MORE WORK

Some of the Bible Students' classes are doing excellent service in the Class Extension work and, as a matter of course, report regularly. Often the attendance at the Extension meetings is good. Frequently the first three meetings lead up to the succeeding three, and are then followed by the establishment of new classes. We recommend that wherever possible these new classes have their local meetings on some week night, and that they endeavor to congregate with the Central class at least Sundays.

We have been surprised that some large classes containing numerous brethren well qualified for the work are doing little or nothing in Class Extension. We have been trying to think out the cause of this apparent lack of zeal in the harvest work. Knowing the dear friends to be zealous, knowing that talent in their midst is lying dormant, we have been forced to the conclusion which we are about to present: that is, that the brethren who are capable of Class Extension work in such classes are too modest to suggest the work, lest it should seem that they are trying to have the class elect them to the eldership and authorize them to proceed with the Extension work.

Modesty is always an excellent quality; but it must be especially hard for dear brethren of some ability to abstain from proclaiming the good tidings—to abstain from going out and starting little meetings themselves.

There surely are classes deficient in material for Class Extension—classes which need all the brethren of any ability in their midst. But there are other classes which need to wake up, to take note of brethren having some ability, and to encourage them to use their time and strength in the Class Extension work. We urge, therefore, that the classes regard as available assets the material which they possess, and seek to glorify the Lord in the use of these assets.

In cases where brethren possessed of ability to give Chart Talks see opportunities for Class Extension, and are financially able to manage the matter themselves, we advise that they proceed to hold meetings. We recommend, however, that they first mention the matter to the class, so that, if possible, co-operation on the part of all may be secured, and that all may join in a good work and in the resultant joys and blessings of service.

SERMONS IN THE NEWSPAPERS

Under God's providence a great work is being carried on through the newspapers; and the Gospel is being presented to millions who never attend meetings for divine worship. Some of these are discouraged Christians who lost their faith in human creeds and systems of men and found no footing for their faith in the Bible because they did not understand it. How blessed that God has such an arrangement by which the good tidings may reach those otherwise outside any general opportunity for hearing it!

But alas, some Christians have a bitter and sectarian spirit! The fact that many of the churches have smaller congregations as a result of loss of faith years ago makes their votaries angry that the message should be heard outside the churches. Some of these unreasonable zealots are doing all they know how to do to hinder the message from going to the outsiders through the newspapers. Oh, why do they not rejoice that the Gospel is being preached to the poor, to the outsiders, to the publicans and sinners!

Under these circumstances it behooves all of us to encourage the editors of the newspapers publishing the sermons. They should know that their work is appreciated. Letters sent to them should be moderate and kind. They are not publishing the sermons because of any personal interest in them, but merely because the public are reading them. Let us hold up their hands, not only encouraging them with postcards, assuring them of appreciation of the sermons and of the good work they thereby assist in, but let us also give to such papers a financial encouragement through subscriptions.

The WATCH TOWER Office frequently has special agents' rates for newspapers. In any event it knows quite well which papers would most need a little encouragement in the way of new subscriptions. Subscriptions sent to us will be wisely used. Many of our readers doubtless can afford to take several papers, and, after reading these, to mark the sermons and to use them as tracts amongst their friends and neighbors. Do it now before you forget it!

IN DREAMLESS SLEEP DEAD AWAIT CHRIST'S RETURN

"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also."—John 14:3.

The error of supposing that men are alive when they are dead lies close to the foundation of every theological error the world over. We have all erred in taking the guess of Plato instead of the Word of God, and we can get rid of our difficulties and theological entanglements only by retracing our steps. Notwithstanding all that we have said and written, calling attention to the words of the Scriptures, the question arises, Do you mean to tell us that our friends do not go to heaven immediately when they die?

That is exactly what we are endeavoring to demonstrate to be the teaching of the Bible. The Bible alone, of all re-

ligious books, teaches that a dead man is dead, and knows nothing, and that his only hope is in the divine arrangement through Christ, by a resurrection of the dead—"both of the just and unjust."—Acts 24:15.

When we remember that, according to nearly all the religious creeds and theories of the world, 999 out of every thousand pass immediately at death into most horrible sufferings, one would think that all would be glad to promptly accept the Bible testimony, that death is a dreamless sleep until the resurrection awakening. Why anyone should prefer to think his friends and neighbors and the heathen millions are suffer-

ing torture, rather than to think of them as being asleep, is beyond our comprehension.

The fact probably is that selfishness has such a hold upon the masses that they care and think little respecting others than their own relatives and friends; and the same selfishness inclines them, with infatuation, to believe that they and their relatives, though no better than the rest of mankind, are special favorites in heaven, and will be granted the reward of the saints, however unsaintly their lives may have been. Some one has suggested that the ideal prayer for such is:

"God bless me and my wife,
My son John and his wife;
Us four, and no more."

In harmony with this we find that when death invades a family circle this selfish egotism assumes that the deceased is acceptable to God as a saint, and wafted immediately to heavenly bliss—regardless of how unsaintly had been the life and how little of the spirit of Christ was ever manifested. The deception is reinforced by the Christian ministers called to conduct the funeral service. Whatever he may read from the Bible to the effect that, if there be no resurrection, they that have fallen asleep have perished, his sermon is sure to give the inference that the deceased needs no re-urrection, because he has not died, but has merely been transferred from a lower plane of life to a higher one.

Proof of this is not given and not asked. The proof is not given because there is no Scriptural proof to give. It is not asked because the people are not sufficiently intelligent on religious subjects to demand a reason and a proof of what is presented to them. The remedy for all this will come when we become more intelligent, more reasoning. No minister of Christ should be abashed to be asked the reason for his faith. St. Peter exhorted that every Christian should be so thoroughly informed respecting the divine message as to be able to give a reason to whoever would ask concerning his own faith and his presentations to others.

Here note our text. In it the Master says not a word about our going to him, but quite the contrary—that he will come and receive us unto himself. This is in full accord with the teaching of the apostles. Do they not tell that at the second coming of Christ the resurrection of the church will be the first item in order; that then that which was sown in weakness will be raised in power; that sown in dishonor will be raised in glory; that sown an animal body will be raised a spirit body; and that so we shall ever be with the Lord? Do they not tell us that this will be an instantaneous change? Is it not styled an awakening from the sleep of death?

Hearken to St. Paul: "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (seventh trumpet); for the trumpet shall sound." "and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught away together to a meeting with the Lord in the air." (1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17) How plain, how simple! That will be the first meeting of the church with her Lord. All of her members dying before that time will "sleep," while those dying since that time will not need to sleep and wait for the glorious change. But, says one, does not the second coming of Christ take place whenever his holy ones die? Does he not immediately come to receive them unto himself?

Surely only a very lame theory could seek to bolster itself up by such a perversion of the Scriptures. If Christ were to come every time one of his saintly ones dies, would it not mean many comings instead of merely a second coming? And even if his faithful were very few indeed, does it not seem that this would keep the Redeemer busy coming and departing every few minutes?

Only crass ignorance of the Bible could excuse any such misapplication of its teachings. Not merely one statement of the Scripture bears upon this subject, but hundreds of statements of Scripture, by Jesus and the apostles; and all these contradict any such thought.

"NO MAN HATH ASCENDED TO HEAVEN"

Hearken to Jesus' words, "No man hath ascended up to heaven." (John 3:13) Only the Son of Man has ever been in heaven. He has ascended up where he was before, with additional glory and honor. He is now preparing a place for his bride class and preparing the bride class for the place—the place of honor at his own right hand. He is overseeing her experiences and causing all things to work together for her good, that she at his second coming may be prepared and be accepted as his bride and granted a share in his glory, honor and immortality.

It is in full harmony with this that a little later on the Great Teacher declared that all the dead are in the grave, and that at his second advent he will first call forth his faithful

ones to the perfection of life; and later call forth the remainder of mankind, not as yet found worthy of life, that they may have an opportunity, a testing as respects their worthiness or unworthiness of everlasting life on the human plane.

Hear his assurance again respecting his faithful ones—that they shall share in his resurrection, the chief resurrection, to glory, honor, immortality, on the spirit plane. He said, "Blessed and holy are all they that have part in the first resurrection; they shall be priests unto God and Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."—Rev. 20:6.

Be it noted that in all these assurances the church is spoken of as a class, all of whom will enter into glory together, at Christ's second coming, and not separately, as each may die. True, each has an individual trial or testing to determine whether or not he or she will be accounted worthy, or fitted for a place in the glorious body of Christ, in the glorious bride company; but the statement is repeatedly made that we shall be glorified together, that we shall have part in the one resurrection.

"DAVID NOT ASCENDED TO HEAVEN"

In full accord with all the foregoing is St. Peter's statement on the day of Pentecost: "For David is not ascended into the heavens"; "his sepulchre is with us unto this day." (Acts 2:34, 29.) St. Peter's words imply that if King David had ascended to heaven he would have no sepulchre on earth. Similarly, we might say of all of the prophets, and of all other persons that, if once they ascended to the heavenly plane, they could not be said to have any sepulchre on earth, for the very thought connected with the word sepulchre is that of a personality awaiting a resurrection, awaiting deliverance from the state and condition of death. So the Scriptures always refer, not to a resurrection of the living, which would be an absurdity, but to a resurrection of the dead.

Note the connection in which the Apostle Peter uses this expression: "David is not ascended into the heavens." He had just called attention to the fact that David prophesied of the resurrection of Jesus. In the prophecy he personated Jesus, and said, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol (hades), nor suffer thine holy one to see corruption." (V. 27) St. Peter argues that this was not true of David, that he did see corruption, that his soul was left in sheol, and is still left there, and will not be reclaimed until Messiah, in the resurrection morning, shall call him forth.

"BE WITH ME IN PARADISE"

But, says some one, did not the dying thief go with Jesus to Paradise the very day in which they both died? And if so, does not this prove that all in harmony with God go to heaven when they die, whatever may be the condition of others in death?

No, we have made a stupid blunder and misinterpretation of our Redeemer's dying words to the thief. The wrong thought being in our minds we misinterpreted in harmony therewith. And our interpretation has done an immense amount of harm. Thousands of people have been encouraged to continue a life of sin, trusting that with their dying breath they may have the opportunity of saying, "God be merciful to me," and then be immediately ushered into glory, honor and immortality, as joint-heirs with the Savior, and in as honorable a station as those who "have fought to win the prize, and sailed through bloody seas" of trial and persecution and self-denial.

What a travesty of justice to suppose such an application of this principle! For instance, two ungodly persons quarrel. Both draw revolvers and fire; one dies instantly; the other, the worse of the two, lives a moment, in which he says, "God, be merciful to me." Then, theoretically, he passes into glory, while his victim, not having the opportunity for a cry for mercy, we are told by the same theory, is doomed to endless torture.

Note the circumstance. (Luke 23:39-43) Jesus hung between two thieves, one of whom joined with the multitude in railing at him as an imposter, crying out, "Yes if you be the Christ, save yourself and us from death." The other, of better heart, honestly admitted his own guilt and the guilt of his comrade, but defended Jesus, declaring that he was innocent. Following this, he addressed Jesus. We paraphrase his words: "Lord, I have defended you against an unjust attack; remember this poor thief if you ever have an opportunity to do a kindness to me in return. I heard you before Pilate say that you have a kingdom, but not of this age; some heavenly kingdom, I therefore presume. I know little about such matters, but from what I have seen of you I can well surmise you king of such a kingdom. My request is, 'Remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.'"

To this Jesus replied, "Verily, verily (so be it, so be it, as you have asked)—verily, I say unto thee this day (this dark day, in which it would appear that I have not a friend in

heaven or on earth—this dark day in which I am crucified as a malefactor, a falsifier and a blasphemer—I say unto thee this day), Thou shalt be with me in Paradise.”

On the day of their dying all three went to hades, to sheol, to the tomb, to the state of the dead. The two thieves still remain there, and are amongst those mentioned by the Prophet Daniel when he refers to those “who sleep in the dust of the earth,” who will come forth in the resurrection morning. (Daniel 12:2.) But Jesus arose from sheol, from hades, from the tomb, from the state of death, on the third day. He had not been to Paradise, for Paradise is not even yet in existence. he had not been to heaven, for he had been dead. Let us hear his own words to Mary on the morning of his resurrection: “I have not yet ascended * * * to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” (John 20:17) Could anything be plainer, simpler, more harmonious?

“DEPART AND BE WITH CHRIST”

Ah, says one, I have great faith in St. Paul, and I remember his words: “I am in a strait between two things; having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.” (Phil. 1:23) If St. Paul expected to depart and be with Christ, why is it not reasonable to suppose that he did so, and that all others, at least of the saintly, at death so depart and pass at once into the presence and fellowship of Jesus?

Yet such a misunderstanding of St. Paul's words and thoughts are excusable in view of the general trend of Christian thought on this subject for centuries, and in view of the error made in this case by the translators. We are not faulting the translators, because they had the erroneous thought firmly imbedded in their minds and presumably were trying to make the apostle here say what they conscientiously thought he ought to say.

But what we are interested in knowing is, What did he say on the subject?

Let us read the apostle's words critically. He was in a strait between two things—whether he would prefer to live and suffer further for the truth's sake, and assist the brethren, or whether he would prefer to die and rest from his labors. Between these two positions he had no choice. But there was a third thing—and if this had been a possibility he would have had no difficulty in deciding—he had a real, positive desire respecting it; neither of the things which were possible to him would have stood in comparison at all, this third thing would have been so desirable.

Now what was this third thing? It was not to live and suffer and help the brethren, nor was it to die and be at rest from his labors. The third thing, according to a literal translation, is expressed thus: “I have a desire for the returning, and being with Christ, which is far better”—far better than either living under the present trying conditions or dying, sleeping, resting and waiting for the kingdom.

But, says one, by what authority do you render the word depart by a word of very opposite meaning, namely return? We answer that we give this rendering on the authority of the Greek text. The Greek word is *anulusai*; it is found in one other place in the Bible, and there it is rendered return. In this other case there can be no question as to the proper translation.—See Luke 12:36.

Let us, then, dear fellow-Christian, turn from the follies of the dark ages and take the inspired words of Jesus, the apostles and prophets, and have, indeed, “beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for the spirit of heaviness,” in respect to the understanding of the heavenly Father's program. Thus we will find fulfilled in us more and more the Master's prayer: “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.”

CONSECRATION THE NORMAL ATTITUDE FOR GOD'S INTELLIGENT CREATURES

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”—1 Cor. 2:14.

By the expression “natural man” we understand the Scriptures to mean all who have not experienced a change of nature in the begetting of the holy Spirit. All mankind, including Adam himself, are natural men. Even a perfect human being cannot receive the deep spiritual truths which God reveals to his consecrated children through the holy Spirit.

Whoever is desirous of being in harmony with God and is endeavoring to become so, even though he be not justified, is looking forward to full justification. If he continue in this course, he will eventually become justified—if not at the present time, then during Messiah's reign. But in this age, none can attain to full justification except by faith in the blood of Christ, which leads its possessor to make complete consecration of himself to God, by the intervention of our Lord Jesus as Advocate, who imputes to him a sufficiency of his merit to make up for his deficiency.

Since our Lord imputes his merit only to those who make a full consecration of themselves, one who merely believes in the Savior and wishes to do right, cannot at this time enter into full peace with God. He receives only a measure of peace and justification; for those alone who are fully absolved from sin and presented by the Advocate can be accepted by the Father—these alone are fully justified in the Father's sight.

Some speak of the sanctified as if these were no longer justified. The fact is that only the sanctified can be said to be fully justified; and they must maintain their justification with God, else they could never make their calling and election sure.

It is very important to observe the sharp outlines and distinctions which the Scriptures establish. According to these outlines, the holy Spirit is given only in a very special manner, during a very special age, for a very special purpose. The distinction is absolute and positive in every sense of the word. Only those begotten of the Father have his Spirit, which is the Spirit of the Son; and those alone who have the Spirit are begotten to the new nature.

GOOD TRAITS OF CHARACTER NOT A PROOF OF CONSECRATION

In times past we did not clearly distinguish the Lord's people from the world. Whenever we met a man with kind, gentle manners, whether an infidel, a Brahman, a Mohammedan, a Presbyterian, a Methodist or merely one of the world, we said to ourselves, “Here is a man who has the Spirit of the Lord.” Then, we did not know what we were talking about; now, we can recognize the difference. We are certainly glad to acknowledge good traits of character in heathen as well as

Christians, but we are not to accept gentleness and kindness of manner as evidence that their possessor has the holy Spirit.

We have all seen people who have very proper sentiments of justice on some subjects, who are yet manifestly not God's people, begotten of the holy Spirit. Such persons are usually fine characters. Nevertheless, their conscientiousness causes them to admit that they are sinners and have need of divine forgiveness. We are glad that there are such people, and we should encourage rather than discourage them.

The explanation of this condition of affairs is that these fine characters are not so fallen as some others. God made man in his own image and likeness. With the fall of man came the impairment of that godlike disposition, but the image of God is not altogether lost. For our part, we wish to show that our Redeemer is the only channel for that forgiveness, the need of which they recognize, and that the only condition of their full acceptance with God is the entire consecration of all that they possess to the service of the Lord.

On one occasion our Lord said, “No man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me draw him.” (John 6:44.) No one will receive the holy Spirit without having been drawn to Christ, but some may be drawn without receiving the holy Spirit. Possibly in these persons that endowment which God gave to Adam and pronounced “very good” has been less impaired by the fall than it has been in others. Such naturally desire to have God's approval and the blessings which he is willing to give to those who seek him.

Having this disposition, such persons are said to be drawn to God. But the Father points them to the Son, through the knowledge of simple truths. For instance, they may be influenced through hearing a hymn sung; such as,

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.”

These words contain the truth of God to any one who is in a right condition of heart, and are a very valuable hint as to the way to approach God. If those who are seeking to know God desire to inquire further on the subject, they will probably be led to consult with some of the children of God.

Upon the inquiry of those under the conviction of sin as to what must be done to be saved, we tell them, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” (Acts 16:31.) Make a full consecration of your life unto God, and thus you may become a son of God. If any one is obedient to the

drawing, the next step for him to take is to say, "I give myself to the Lord and trust him fully, for I realize how unworthy I am."

The course which we are describing is that which one must follow in order to be acceptable to God. But first of all, he must desire to approach the Lord. If we should find any one who is totally depraved, there would be no use to attempt to draw such a one toward righteousness, truth and God. Even those who have the right attitude of mind may not be equally impressed at all times. It may be that some circumstances awaken them to the need of consecration before they will take the step which will enable them to become sons of God.—Rom. 12:1, 2.

THE HIGH CALLING NOT FOR ALL

No man, however, takes this step of consecration unless he is called of God. There must be the call, or invitation as there was with Aaron and with our Lord Jesus Christ. (Heb. 5:4, 5.) This call comes through the proclamation of the Gospel. Each must hear for himself before he can accept. "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14.) So then, it is for God to begin the work with the unjustified by drawing them to Christ for justification; and it is for our Lord Jesus Christ to continue this work with the consecrated. Furthermore, it is the privilege of all who come into God's family to proclaim these truths to others, to set forth the terms by which those who receive the call may accept it, while still "it is called today," before this age of sacrifice ends.—Heb. 4:7; 2 Cor. 6:2.

None come to God in this Gospel age except those who make a sacrifice. Others may turn toward God; they may look toward God; they may be converted from a wicked life to a better one. But none except the class who are adopted into God's family are begotten of the holy Spirit. The invitation of this age is not an invitation to do the best we can; we are all called in the one hope of our calling. (Eph. 4:4.) "Gather my saints together unto me, saith the Lord, those who have a covenant with me by sacrifice."—Psa. 50:5.

It is good not to do wrong. But more than a righteous life is required of those who would be sons of God. Consecration has always been proper; it is the normal attitude for all of God's intelligent creatures. The Creator is the one to whom all are properly under obligations for every blessing which they enjoy; and heart, mind, tongue and hand should be ready for consecration to do the Father's will. Whether angels or men or new creatures in Christ—all should be in this attitude.

Since consecration is the only reasonable attitude, then, when the one hundred and forty-four thousand of the elect church shall have passed their testing it will still be appropriate for God to permit people to consecrate, and to be pleased with their consecration. Therefore, we may expect that, in the end of the reign of Christ, all the worthy ones shall have made consecration to God. It was thus in the Jewish age, although there was no "high calling" then, nor privilege to understand the deep things of God.

The privilege of becoming joint-heirs with Christ will end as soon as the elect number is completed. During the thousand years of Christ's reign, those who consecrate will come to understand all human things; but not being begotten of the holy Spirit; they cannot understand the things of the Spirit.

KNOWLEDGE OF DEEP THINGS A GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT

We believe that there are some now living, perhaps a good many, who are consecrated to God and whose consecration has been accepted, but who are not in the light of present truth. This number may include some who are what the Scriptures term "babes" in Christ, and others to whom the Scriptures refer as the "great multitude." (Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:2; Rev. 7:9) The "foolish virgin" class are probably in very large number all around us. The fact that there are some of these in Babylon seems to be indicated by the command, "Come out of her, my people." (Rev. 18:4) If they are in Babylon, their presence there shows that they are not yet well developed; and if they are God's people, they are not enjoying the full strength of the present truth, although Spirit-begotten.

This fact does not signify that they may not receive present truth. On the contrary, we think it quite likely that some may be helped out of Babylon and into a better understanding of the divine plan; for some of the babes may be strengthened, built up, to a full appreciation of the things of the Spirit. We are to have in mind the fact that God has so arranged that "the deep things of God" cannot be known instantaneously; this knowledge comes gradually as an evidence of faithfulness to God.

Those who have not yet learned fully to reverence God and who have not yet made progress in the development of the graces and fruits of the Spirit cannot expect to understand the deep things of God. It is our duty and privilege, not only to assist these brethren, but to build one another up and to strengthen one another. Let us see that we do these things.

FORGIVE SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN

MATTHEW 18:15-35.—DECEMBER 15.

"Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God, for Christ's sake, forgave you."—Eph. 4:32.

To learn today's lesson well means a blessing for life to every true Christian, and might be said to ensure him eternal life—so fully would he be in accord with the divine requirements. The lesson relates specially to the consecrated, to the members of the body of Christ, the church, of which he is the head, although application, of course, may be made by others with profit.

The Master's rule for his followers is: If a brother injure you, go to him alone with the matter, striving to reach an agreement, an understanding. The probability is that misunderstanding is all that there is of it. But if this does not suffice and you consider the matter serious enough ask two others to accompany you to the offender without explaining to them the mission—leave their minds free to hear the case and to advise yourself and the person injuring.

The agreement of these brethren and their advice should be followed by both. If they disagree with you, you should acknowledge that you have erred and that the matter is evidently susceptible of this construction. If they agree with you, and your opponent refuses to heed their counsel and persists in doing you injury, and you still think it of sufficient importance to trouble the church with the matter, you are then at liberty so to do. The church's decision of the question is to be final, binding upon both. The one refusing to hear the church is to be treated as an outsider, not in the sense of doing him injury, but abstaining from appointing him to any position, or honor in the church, until his course shall be changed. How simple the divine direction; what a blessing would come from following it!

FORGIVE "SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN"

St. Peter put a hypothetical question, of how many times a brother might trespass and ask forgiveness and yet be forgiven—would seven times be the limit? The Master practically declared that there could be no limit, that any brother confessing his fault and asking forgiveness must be forgiven,

if it should recur four hundred and ninety times. There is no other position left; forgiveness is obligatory when asked for. We must not be too much afraid of the consequences of following the Master's direction; we must put the responsibility of the matter with him, assured that his wisdom has not misdirected us.

Then our Lord gave a parable, to illustrate this matter, in respect to the kingdom of heaven class—the church in the present embryotic condition. A certain king had a reckoning with his servants and squared up all accounts. Amongst the others, one owed him ten thousand talents. His master commanded him to be sold, and his wife and all that he had, until the payment should be made. But the servant fell down at his master's feet and besought him to have compassion on him and he would pay the debt. The master had compassion on him and discontinued prosecution on account of the debt.

"OWED HIM A HUNDRED PENCE"

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

AN IMPORTANT LESSON HERE

What is the lesson? It is that we should have compassion upon one another, even as we desire that God for Christ's sake

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

SO ALSO DID GOD DO UNTO YOU

Our Lord Jesus explains that his parable teaches the principles along which the heavenly Father deals with the members of the body of Christ, which is the church. If they are harsh and unsympathetic, if they hold their brethren to a strict account along lines of justice, then the heavenly Father will so deal with them, and will hold them to account for all their shortcomings. It would seem that if God’s people would realize the force of this lesson, the practice of forgiving the brethren of their trespasses and shortcomings would very generously and very generally be brought into play, for who of us could afford to have the Heavenly Father exact of us a full penalty for every imperfection, and refuse to remit any of the same?

We show our appreciation of God’s mercy toward us by schooling ourselves in his character and becoming more and more merciful and generous toward all the household of faith. And if merciful toward the brethren, naturally we would be generous also toward all men. In other words, as we remember and appreciate our own weaknesses and blemishes, it will make us sympathetic with the brethren and with all mankind. And mercy, generosity, sympathy, God delights in. Such as cultivate these graces of the Spirit will be pleasing in the Lord’s sight, and they will thereby be fitted and prepared to have a share with Jesus in his throne of glory; for that great Messianic kingdom will be established for the very purpose of showing

mercy unto thousands of mankind, who will return to divine favor and blessing, under clearer knowledge and with the assistance that will then be afforded.

ADAM’S SIN IS NOT MEANT

We are not to understand this parable to refer to divine forgiveness of original sin. The sin of Adam is not forgiven simply because we cry for mercy. Adam and the entire race might have called for mercy, and would have received none, except in the divine way—through Jesus—through faith in his blood. Nor could this forgiveness be granted until Jesus had finished his sacrifice and ascended up on high, and there appeared in the presence of God on behalf of those coming to the Father through his merit.

This parable refers entirely to subsequent sins—sins referred to in our Lord’s prayer, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.” This is shown also by the fact that the parable speaks of these as servants, whereas the world, as sinners, are not God’s servants, but aliens, strangers, foreigners. The only ones whom God will recognize as servants are such as have come back into relationship with him through Jesus—through faith and consecration. It is these who are servants of God and who are required to have mercy upon their fellow-servants—upon other brethren.

Each and every one of the new creatures, sons of God, accepted through the merit of Jesus, is held responsible for his own weaknesses; but divine power has provided for the cancellation of these freely for Christ’s sake, upon their acknowledgment and request for forgiveness. But the forgiving of these trespasses of God’s children is made dependent upon their having a spirit of forgiveness toward the brethren, for “if ye do not from the heart forgive one another’s trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you.” “With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure” of benevolence ye mete out to others, the same shall be meted out to you. How wonderful are the divine arrangements! How blessed, how profitable to us, how helpful to us in our preparation for the kingdom?

MEAN CHRISTIANS AND NOBLE UNBELIEVERS

[This article was a reprint of that published in issue of June, 1898, which please see.]

“UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN”

ISAIAH 9:1-7.—DECEMBER 22.

“Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given.”—Verse 6.

Today’s study relates to a subject which has thrilled the civilized world for centuries—a subject which will never grow old—a subject which, on the contrary, shall to all eternity be a theme of angels and of men. The birth of Jesus, to be rightly understood and esteemed, must be considered from the standpoint of a gift of love divine. Any other view of the matter is merely the casket without the jewel. The Scriptures give us the key to the thought: “God so loved the world that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”—John 3:16.

The world was under sentence of death; mankind had been dying for more than four thousand years. God had pitied humanity from the first. Yea, before sin entered, divine wisdom saw the end, and would not have created man, or would not have permitted the condition which led to sin and the sentence of death, had divine wisdom not foreseen and arranged in advance for human redemption.

God had purposely arranged the matter so that it would require the death of a perfect man to redeem Adam and the race which lost life in and through him. God knew from the beginning that no such perfect man could be found, because all men were of Adamic stock and had a share in Adamic weakness, imperfection and condemnation. From the beginning God in the divine plan contemplated that the Only Begotten of the Father, the Logos, the active Agent of Divinity in the work of Creation, should be granted the great privilege of being man’s Redeemer, and thereby securing a great reward—“Glory, honor and immortality,” the divine nature, through a resurrection from the dead.

THE FIRST STEP OF REDEMPTION

The primary step in man’s recovery necessarily was that the Logos should be made flesh and dwell amongst us and taste death, by the grace of God, for every man. (John 1:14; Heb. 2:9) It is this first step that we celebrate at this season of the year—the birth of Jesus. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be reclaimed.

Today’s study points out that the ministry of Jesus would be in Galilee; that those people of the Jews who at the time

were supposed to be in greatest darkness would see the great light of divine truth, as represented in Jesus and his ministry. This had a primary fulfilment in Galilee, where the major portion of the mighty works of Jesus were performed. But its real fulfilment lies in the future, when the great light of the Millennial kingdom, “the Sun of Righteousness, shall arise with healing in its beams.” Before that glorious Sun, sorrow and sighing will flee away; ignorance and superstition will vanish; sin and darkness will be no more; every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. Jesus is the great Center of that Sun of Righteousness, but, as he points out, the bride class, in process of selection during this age, is to be with him in the morning, shining forth his glory. They shall sit with him in his throne. After the “wheat” of this age is gathered into the “garner” by the power of the first resurrection, the bride of Christ will shine forth with the bridegroom, to heal earth’s sorrows and to scatter earth’s night. (Matt. 13:43) All this will come to us because “unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given”; because “the Government shall rest upon his shoulders”; because “his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty, Mighty One, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”

THE FALL OF BABYLON

We are to understand verses 3 to 5 as referring not to natural Israel, but to spiritual Israel—nominal. The holy nation has phenomenally increased without increasing the joy. There are many false children in the nominal family of God; there are many “tares” in the wheat-field. But in the harvest time of this age there will be a joy; the faithful “will rejoice as they that divide the spoil.” The burdensome yoke of the creedal superstitions will be broken, and the rod of the oppressor, Satan, will be broken as in the day of Midian, when Gideon with his little band put to flight the army of the Midianites and set the people free. Verse 5 intimates that the fall of Babylon and the breaking of the yoke and the rod will be in the great “time of trouble.” “For all the armor of the armed men and the turmoil and the garments rolled in blood shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire.”

MESSIAH'S MANY TITLES

Our great Redeemer, highly exalted, is eventually to bear many titles in commemoration of the many wonderful Offices he will fill and services he will accomplish. But these are yet future. His great work in the past, the Redemption work, was the foundation of all his future work. On account of his faithfulness he will have a right to assume these various offices and use these various powers; and as each comes into exercise it will be used by Jesus. The right to govern the world is his since he died on our behalf, but he awaits the Father's time for taking to himself his glorious power to reign; and the Government must come to him before he can begin to fulfil the various titles.

First of all, his revelation to the world will be as the Wonderful One, the embodiment, the Expression, of divine justice, divine love, divine wisdom and divine power. As yet the world knoweth him not. He will be revealed to mankind "in flaming fire" in the time of trouble, and subsequently, in the rescue work of his Millennial kingdom.

He will be the world's Counselor, to give assistance, guidance, direction, whereby they may return through restitution into harmony with Jehovah and to the enjoyment of the blessings provided through redemption. As the Head of the church he has been her Counselor, but our text refers to him as the Great King or Governor of the world, and as the world's Instructor, the Great Prophet, or Teacher, whom God promised through Moses.

His title, The Mighty God, or Mighty, Mighty One, will be recognized then, on earth, as well as in heaven—"that him hath God set forth to be a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance and remission of sins to Israel," and "to all that are afar off."—Acts 5:31; 2:39.

The title, The Everlasting Father, will apply to him as the Life-Giver of the world, during the thousand years of his reign.

In all that time he will be giving "life more abundant" to mankind—everlasting life to all who will obey him—therefore his title, The Everlasting Father, or the Father who will give everlasting life to humanity. All the world of mankind, regenerated on the human plane, will obtain their right to everlasting life as human beings in an earthly Paradise from their Redeemer, who will then be their King. Not so the church, for Jesus is not the church's Everlasting Father. On the contrary, St. Peter declares "The God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ hath begotten us again to a hope of life."

His title, The Prince of Peace, will not apply to him at the beginning of his reign, when he will be breaking in pieces as a potter's vessel every human system out of accord with the divine standards (Rev. 2:27; Psalms 2:9), but true peace shall speedily be established, and He shall be known as The Prince of Peace, and One whose reign will be undisputed and unmolested. "Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end"; there will be no rebellion; his kingdom will not pass away. When his reign shall terminate finally, at the close of the thousand years, it will be because "He will deliver the kingdom over to God, even the Father," that he may be the Great All in All.

"UPON THE THRONE OF DAVID"

Messiah's kingdom is styled "the Throne of David" for two reasons: first, the name of David signifies Beloved, and the Messiah, as the Beloved of God, of the Father, is the Antitype of David, even as Messiah's kingdom will be the Antitype of David's kingdom. David merely "sat upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord"; it was not his. So the Greater than David will sit upon the Throne of the kingdom of Jehovah, to order it and to establish it to completion, during the thousand years of his reign. Then he will deliver it up. "The zeal (love) of Jehovah of Hosts will perform this," operating through Messiah.

TWO YEARS MORE

Two years more, and I shall see him, whom not having seen
I love,
This grand prospect, daily, hourly, holds my heart on things
above;
Now by faith, I'm pressing onward in the footsteps of my
Lord,
Rough the pathway, steep and narrow, 'tis the path my Master
trod.

Oh, the rapture of that meeting, Oh, what ecstasy 'twill bring,
When with open, perfect vision I shall gaze upon my King!
I shall feast upon the beauty of the One I love so well,
And with tongue no longer stammering, all my love for him
I'll tell.

Two years, and I'll see the Father, when the Son with loving
pride,
Shall conduct me to his presence, with the rest of his dear
bride.
What a sense of awe will fill me, as with unveiled face I
gaze
On that grand and mighty Being, whom all heaven unites to
praise!

Shall I know myself, I wonder, when he takes me to his heart,
And of all that heavenly glory I shall find myself a part?
Heaven not complete without me, mine, eternities of bliss?
Oh, my soul, thou must not stagger, for thy God hath promised
this!

Oh! a secret fear assails me, that I may be left behind;
Then I bid my soul take courage, 'tis that enemy of mine!
He would use to cause my downfall censure sharp, or flattering
breath,
For he hates God's holy children with a hatred strong as
death.

But my Father will not leave me to his mercy, but prepare
Heavenly armor to protect me, which, if I will always wear,
Every fight will prove me victor, as I wield the two-edged
Sword,
World and flesh and powers of evil, all must fall before his
Word!

Oh, my soul, thy life dependeth on thy faithfulness alone;
While the days and hours are passing, art thou holding fast
thy crown?
Keep this thought before thee always, let it daily strengthen
thee,

"Two years more decides forever thine eternal destiny!"

Then the thought, Oh! how it thrills me, any day he may send
word—

"Child, thy work on earth is finished, enter into thy reward."
But, if I need further testings, crosses heavy, trial sore,
I can wait, for at the longest, it is only two years more!

—UNKNOWN.

KNOW OF THE DOCTRINE

JOHN 7:17.—DECEMBER 29.

"If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."—John 7:17.

We are living in a day when the very word doctrine seems to be offensive to the majority of Christian people. Each denomination realizes that its own system of doctrines is imperfect, unsatisfactory, undefendable. And the same is believed in respect to all other doctrines. Hence by mutual consent Christian people seem disposed to henceforth and forever ignore doctrines; for they believe that, if after nineteen centuries they are thus confused, the matter never was clear and never will be clear to anybody.

All this is a great mistake; the doctrines of Christ, as presented by the Great Teacher and his apostles, was a great message, of which none of them were ashamed. The difficulty with

the Lord's people today is that we gradually fell away from those doctrines—we gradually put darkness for light and light for darkness, and thus gradually got into the spirit of Babylon, and into the spirit of bondage to human traditions and creeds. Instead of shunning doctrines, we should realize that they are the very things needed to cause the scattering of our darkness and superstitions, and to draw all of God's people nearer together.

The doctrines of Christ and the apostles is what we need to inspire us to break down all our creed fences, which so long have separated us as God's people, the one from the other, in various denominational folds, all of which are contrary to the

divine arrangement; for God has but the one fold for all his "sheep" of this age, as he will have another fold for the restitution "sheep" of the next age—the Messianic kingdom age.

"ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM"

Can we doubt that if as God's people we put away sectarianism and the creed spectacles of our forefathers, and if we go with pure, sincere hearts to the Lord and his Word, we will there find again the "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father over all, and one Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," and "one church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven"? (Eph. 4:5, 6; Heb. 12:23) Let us hearken to the words: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward," "But remember the former days, in which ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly whilst ye were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and by afflictions; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used." "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." Heb. 10:35, 32, 33, 36.

The time seems long to all of us, even though we remember that "a day with the Lord is as a thousand years." When we think of the fact that it is thirty-nine hundred years since God's promise to Abraham, that his seed should bless all the families of the earth—when we think of the fact that Israel did not receive that great privilege of being the spiritual seed from which primarily that blessing should go forth, and that the "elect" are receiving it; when we think of the fact that God has been nearly nineteen centuries in selecting the "elect" from Israel and from all nations, it is enough to stagger our faith unless we hold firmly to the divine promise and remember that God confirmed it with an Oath. By these two immutable, unchangeable things, the divine Word and the divine Oath, we know that the seed of Abraham is to be developed, and that eventually it is to bless all the families of the earth. It is the divine will that we allow our faith in this great promise of God to be "an anchor to our souls, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil."—Heb. 6:19.

THE DOCTRINES OF CHRIST

What we all need as God's people is to put away human theories and other gospels and take hold afresh on the Gospel of Christ. These other gospels are other messages of hope, aside from the one which the Bible presents. For instance, Theosophy is one of these; Evolution is another; New Theology is another. These all hold out a different gospel from that which Jesus and the Apostles presented; the one that was given to use for our sanctification, and through the holding fast of which, and the obedience to The Faith, we are to be saved and given a share with Messiah in his glorious empire of the world.

The doctrines of Christ mean those doctrines presented in the Bible by Jesus and His mouthpieces, the Apostles. These doctrines relate to the church and to the world, and God's blessing for each; these doctrines relate to sin and its forgiveness; the terms of that forgiveness, the basis of that forgiveness—the death of Jesus—and the hope of that forgiveness, release from divine condemnation, fellowship with God, and everlasting life obtained through resurrection of the dead. See Hebrews 6:1-3.

A PREREQUISITE TO KNOWLEDGE

But some one will inquire, Why is it so difficult to understand the doctrines of Christ? Why are there six hundred different denominations of Christians? Why do they all so misunderstand the matter—that these different denominations have resulted from the differences of theory respecting the teachings of the Bible? The simple explanation is that, shortly after the death of the Apostles when the church began to be in a measure of prosperity, the adversary came in and sowed the seeds of false doctrines, using human lips and human pens in his service, through pride and ambition. The darkness became

so great that, looking back today, we speak of the period as the "dark ages."

The various denominations of Christendom are evidences of honesty, perseverance and love of the Truth, because our forefathers, who made these creeds, were each trying to get more and more out of the dark and back to the "True Light." They all made the mistake, however, of holding too much to the creeds and theories of the past. Let us not make the same mistake; let us cut loose entirely from every authority outside the Word of God. Whoever can help us understand God's Word—we should be glad to have his assistance; but we cannot acknowledge as inspired or authoritative the teachings of the "Fathers" of the early times, however conscientious they may have been, because we cannot recognize that there were any such authorized successors to the apostles.

God, who foretold through the prophets this long period of darkness, and who has blessed and guided his saintly children throughout it, without removing all of their blindness, has promised that with the end of this age will come a great blessing and enlightenment upon his people, when the "wise virgins" will find their lamps burning brightly, and be able to understand and appreciate the deep things of God: "The wise shall understand, but none of the wicked shall understand." In the end of this age the curtain was to be drawn, and the "true light" was to shine forth, scattering all the darkness. We are in the dawning of this new age today, and therefore may see much more clearly than did our forefathers, the divine character and plan for human salvation.

WILLETH TO DO HIS WILL

Today's study is a message from the Master's own lips. He gives us the key to a clear knowledge of his doctrines, namely, that the student must be fully consecrated to God and fully desirous of knowing his will and his plan. In order to see light in God's light—to see the truth, from the divine standpoint of the divine revelation, we must draw near to God in the spirit of our minds, consecrated in our heart. We must will to do his will.

But what does this mean? What is it to will to do his will? God's will represents actual perfection of thought and word and deed, toward God, toward our fellows in the body of Christ, and toward all mankind. This is the divine standard set up, but we are no more able to fulfil its demands than were the Jews. As St. Paul declares, "We cannot do the things that we would." Weakness of the flesh, frailty and imperfection, we all have with the world; the best that we can do is to will to do right, and to the best of our ability carry out that covenant with the Lord to do his will. At the very best all will come short of perfection.

But for those who have come into harmony with God, through Christ—for those who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice—for those who have Jesus for their Advocate, a provision has been made, whereby the willing, all desiring to do the divine will, and manifesting endeavors so to do, are counted as righteous—as though they did the divine will perfectly. This class, in the Scriptures, is known as the "saints"; they are the prospective members of the body of Christ. It is to these that the promises of our text apply, that they shall know to do the divine will, shall know whether Jesus merely made up these teachings of himself, or whether he was the active agent of Jehovah in what he did and in what he taught.

At the close of the year, and on the threshold of another, shall we not determine to give our hearts, our wills, fully to the Lord—determine in our wills to do God's will? If so, following the instructions of the Word of God during the coming year, we shall doubtless be blessed and enabled fully to know, to appreciate, to understand, the doctrines of Christ—the deep things of God, which are revealed to this class by the Spirit of God. Blessed are all who put their trust in him!

ARMAGEDDON SERMON IN NEWSPAPERS

We learn that Brother Russell's Armageddon sermon preached at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, November 3, has been published in a great many newspapers which do not publish the sermons regularly. We trust that such publishers will be encouraged to continue the service. We will be glad to receive sample copies of all such papers. Mark these "Special" on the wrapper.

When your newspaper fails to print the sermons, the proper place to write your protest is to its editor or publisher or both. Brother Russell supplies the sermon regularly, and if they

are not printed the editor and publishers are responsible.

The only way the publishers have of certainly knowing whether a sufficient proportion of their readers really appreciate the sermons, is from letters of approval when the sermons are published; or prompt letters of regret when they are discontinued.

The Fourth Volume of the STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES will be entitled hereafter, The Battle of Armageddon. The Armageddon sermon will constitute an additional feature. The price is uniform with the other volumes, 35c delivered.