

SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF CONSOLATION—COMFORT

"Joses, by the Apostles, was surnamed Barnabas, which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation [comfort]"—Acts 4:36.

Comfort! Consolation! What rest and refreshment and peace and joy these words imply! That the name, "son of consolation," or comfort, should be given to any one of mature years tells a whole volume in itself respecting the general character of the person. We know little about Barnabas, but if this one sentence of holy writ comprised the sum of our knowledge we could not fail to love and appreciate him.

In one sense of the word the church is spoken of as a mother, Zion, and all the true people of God are thus represented as her children—sons and daughters. Some of these are sons of comfort and daughters of comfort, while others are sons and daughters of pain, continually causing more or less of distress and discomfort to others and to themselves. We want to see this subject in its true light, in order that we may each act accordingly;—that a larger and an increasing number of the children of Zion shall be sons and daughters of comfort to all with whom they come in contact, and thus in a general way comforters to the church as a whole. Some may be inclined to query, Does the true church need comfort? Are not the majority too comfortable already? Do they not rather need to be stirred up, to be reminded of their sins, to be chided and made generally as uncomfortable as possible, to the intent that they may thus be helped onward and upward?

We would not ignore the fact that there are occasions when reproofs and corrections in righteousness are proper, as the Apostle advised. But we have no sympathy at all with the thought so common with some good people; viz., that they should always be feeling miserable with themselves and making other people miserable, by continually nagging and fault-finding, upbraiding and terrorizing. We believe that such well meant but mistaken efforts have done much harm, have driven away from the family circle of Zion many who could not, without hypocrisy, claim that they were the vilest of sinners, nor properly appreciate prayers in which they were represented as saying, "Lord, be merciful unto us, *miserable sinners!*" when they realized divine favor and forgiveness—justification from all things.

Those needing reproof, rebuke, etc., are such as are walking after the flesh and not after the Spirit—in violation of their covenant. Those who should be warned to flee from the wrath to come are such as have never yet fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel,—such as are without God, and have no hope in the world—no relationship to Christ, through faith and obedience. But the true "wheat," the true members of the body of Christ, the consecrated, are, however imperfectly, continually seeking to walk after the Spirit; though they are well aware that because of imperfections of the flesh they do not and cannot walk up to the spirit. These, instead of needing reproofs and rebukes and smittings and upbraidings for their shortcomings, which they admit and deplore and strive against, need sympathy, assistance, comfort.

Few probably have noticed to what extent the Scriptures administer this very "balm of Gilead" to the true children of Zion; but the Scriptures are full of comfort, and there is great need that all who are truly the Lord's people should see to it that they are more and more sons and daughters of comfort in the church, administering to one another the helpfulness and encouragement and refreshment which the Lord intended. Our Lord spoke of the holy Spirit as the Comforter, and he mentions himself also as a comforter, saying, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you *another* comforter." (John 14:16) To what extent our Lord Jesus was a comforter we may judge as we look back to the three and a half years of his ministry, and at its close hear him say to his faithful ones, "I will not leave you comfortless"—orphans, bereaved of a caretaker. And as respects his care over the apostles while with them, we have a suggestion from his prayer to the Father, "Of those whom thou has given me I have lost none save the son of perdition," as the Scriptures foretold.—John 17:12.

It had been foretold of our Lord in advance through the prophets, that he would be a comforter, as we read, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted; . . . to *comfort* all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."—Isa. 61:1-3.

All this means that our Lord Jesus was a comforter in Zion above and beyond all other comforters. He entered into sympathy with the meek and lowly and right-intentioned in all of their weaknesses and trials and difficulties; and this is the

hold that the character and words of Jesus have today upon our hearts, and also upon the hearts of many who are not his people in the full consecrated sense. It was not by continually chiding the apostles, and accusing them, but because, instead, our Lord sympathized with them, assisted them, and interpreted their heart-intentions liberally, generously, that they became more and more his faithful followers, even unto death. Note the case of the woman taken in sin, and our Lord's failure to make any pharisaical tirade against her. Mark his reproof to those who stood by: "He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone." Mark how, when they were all thus convicted of imperfection in some particular themselves, our Lord said to the woman, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." (John 8:3-11) Notice his dealing with the Apostle Peter, after he had denied him, cursing and swearing. Many of the Lord's followers, if in his stead, would have felt it their bounden duty to rebuke Peter publicly before all the apostles, and to have required public confession and some sort of penance; and on every possible occasion afterward to have thrown in his face his weakness and disloyalty. Such have not rightly interpreted and copied the Lord's spirit, and hence are not sons and daughters of consolation in the church. They are, in the contrary, strife-breeders, vexatious hinderers of the work they desire to forward. They should hear the Master's voice, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me." In proportion as we learn of the Lord we become, not mouthpieces for the law merely, but mouthpieces specially for mercy and love and helpfulness and comfort.

So far as the record shows, our Lord did not once mention to Peter either his profanity or his disloyalty. Peter knew about these without being told; he had already wept over them; a mere word from the Lord in chiding, reproof, might have discouraged him,—perhaps hopelessly. The nearest thing to a reproof in our Lord's conduct and language was the inquiry, "Lovest thou me?" Let all who would be true sons and daughters of consolation in Zion learn this lesson from the great Teacher—not to strive to punish and correct and reprove and rebuke; but to avoid these so far as possible, and to inquire, not so much about the past as about the present—What is the offender's present attitude toward the Lord and toward his flock?

COMFORT AND COMFORTING NEEDFUL

It was with the full appreciation of the fact that the church would need comfort rather than chiding and reproof that our Lord said, "If I go not away the Comforter [the holy Spirit] cannot come." The ransom must be paid, must be presented in the "Most Holy," to the heavenly Father, before his blessing could be bestowed. That blessing would yield the comfort of the begetting of the spirit and comfort of the exceeding great and precious promises to those who had accepted Jesus,—and to those who would believe on him through their word. True, our Lord spoke of the holy Spirit as reproofing—but not as reproofing the church; he said, "He shall reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of a coming judgment." The nearest suggestion to reproof in respect to the holy Spirit's dealing with the church is that given by the Apostle, when he says, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." And again he says, "Quench not the Spirit."—Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19.

The grand provision made for the comfort of the Lord's people clearly indicates a necessity for such comfort; nor is this necessity difficult to find. The Lord's people are beset on every hand with adverse conditions—the world, the flesh, the adversary—seeking to intimidate or discourage or entrap the new creature, so as to hinder its development in grace, knowledge and love, and ultimately to hinder it from the attainment of the perfection and glory to follow, which God has promised to the faithful only. What we need, in order to make us sons and daughters of consolation in the church, is a larger measure of love and sympathy in our hearts. In proportion as sympathy and love come in, they will crowd out the spirit of strife and contention and judging and fault-finding; even as they crowded out at first the spirit of the flesh—anger, malice, hatred, strife, vain-glory.

As a rule (there probably are exceptions to all rules) those who have the spirit of helpfulness, of comfort, of consolation, and who are able to pour this balm into the wounded hearts of others most liberally, are those who themselves have passed through severe trials, difficulties, disciplines, and who have thus been touched with a feeling of the infirmities of our race, and, more than this, have been touched with a feeling of sym-

pathy for the weaknesses and oppositions which assail the "brethren" in their endeavor to walk after the Spirit—not after the flesh. Those who have not "bowels of compassion," who have little of sympathy, little of desire to lend a helping hand to the weak or the stumbling or those who are out of the way, have much yet to learn respecting the real meaning of the word love, in its higher senses—perfect love, love for the brethren, yea, love that extends to all mankind, even to enemies, as it has opportunity, but "especially to the household of faith."

The holy Spirit comforts the church in various ways. (1) It comforts us by enabling us to come into such unity with the truth and with the Lord that we can to a considerable extent see matters not only from the divine standpoint but also can appreciate and feel from the same standpoint. For although the spirit of the truth is in the Word of Truth, there is, nevertheless, a necessity that the eyes of our understanding should be opened, that we may be enabled to comprehend the Word of Truth; and this double comfort is ours through the possession of the holy Spirit,—in proportion as it abounds and is shed abroad in our hearts. It of course abounds and is shed abroad in the Word, but this is not sufficient. It must also be in our hearts a living power. Thus we read of the early church, "Walking in the fear [reverence] of the Lord, and in the comfort of the holy Spirit."—Acts 9:31.

(2) It comforts us through the Scriptures, and through the promises of God, the truth—for is it not the spirit of the truth? The Word of God, as the channel of the truth, is to comfort us in proportion as the holy Spirit guides us into an understanding of it; as we read, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning [instruction], that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."—Rom. 15:4.

(3) The church, the brethren, in proportion as they become imbued with the holy Spirit and with the knowledge of the truth, which it brings to their appreciation and comprehension, thereby become representatives of the holy Spirit in the church—comforters. This is the thought of the Apostle when he says, "Now the God of patience and consolation [comfort] grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus."—Rom. 15:5.

COMFORTED AND TAUGHT TO BE COMFORTERS

Reversing the foregoing order, and considering the way in which the brethren are to comfort the church, we note that it is as the channels of the holy Spirit, and as the mouthpieces of the Word of God. No one is competent to be a comforter unless he already has received comfort from God. So to speak, the Lord's people begin receiving their comfort from the time they accept the assurances of God's Word respecting his love and mercy, as exhibited in Christ Jesus, in that he died for our sins. In their appropriation of this divine favor to themselves by faith, they had their first taste of comfort—peace, joy, blessing. As they then proceeded and learned the way of the Lord more perfectly, the door of access into a still further grace was opened unto them—the grace of invitation to joint-heirship with Christ in the kingdom, and its glorious work of comforting and uplifting mankind in general. (Rom. 5:2) And as this door of favor was entered, additional comfort, additional joy, additional peace and blessing were added and understood and appreciated. And then, as the favored ones progressed under the ministries of the truth, supplied by the holy Spirit, and became more and more able to rightly divide the Word of Truth, and to appreciate the different features of it, in the same proportion their faith grew stronger, and their comforts and joys multiplied through increasing and deepening knowledge of the Lord and of his plan.

Furthermore, as they behold in the glass of the divine Word the glory of the Lord, the reflected light of his glorious character illuminating their hearts and enabling them to comprehend with all saints the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the divine love, it brings still increasing confidence and comfort. And every one of these steps of progress, rightly received, and every additional element of character developed prepares the favored one for the exercise of his privilege of being a comforter to others. True, it was his duty and privilege to begin to comfort others as soon as he received the first elements of comfort himself, and to continue distributing the comforts as they came to him. Indeed, we know both from experience and from the Word that unless he thus made use of the favors and blessings, and showed his appreciation of the grace of God by shining it forth upon others, his light thus being obscured would grow dim and eventually be extinguished. But the point we wish to impress is that ability to be a comforter depends upon growth in grace and knowledge, for none but those who themselves are comforted can dispense this grace to others.

Notice the Apostle's exhortation on this subject, and along

the lines just marked out. In his second letter to the Corinthians (1:3-7), he says, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation [comfort] also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted it is for your consolation [comfort] and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation [comfort] and salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings so shall ye be also of the consolation [comfort]."

Ten times in these verses does the Apostle use this word "comfort." He evidently had a keen appreciation of how much the church needed such consolation, and how much the God of all comfort wished to have his faithful ones comforted, and how even the strongest in the church, the apostles, needed comfort. What better evidence could we ask than that the spirit of comfort and of consolation, which the heavenly Father manifested, which the Lord Jesus manifested, which the apostles manifested and which all the faithful in Christ Jesus are called upon to exercise, is indeed the very spirit of the truth, the holy Spirit! Consequently, those who are making greatest progress in this direction, as comforters in Zion, are growing most in grace; and so we may be sure will be best able to grow also in knowledge, and to be helpful to the church in every sense of the word, and to be used of the Lord as mouthpieces in the ministry of his truth.

A little further along in the same epistle (7:4-13), the Apostle uses this word, "comfort," seven times, saying, "I am filled with comfort; I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation. For when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless, God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation [comfort] wherewith he was comforted of you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoice the more. . . . Therefore, we were comforted in your comfort." Here we see illustrated, in the Apostle's language, the mutual helpfulness of the church in this matter of comfort. Titus had a part in it, Paul had a part in it, the church at Corinth had a part in it—every member possessing the holy Spirit and exercised by it had a share; and the Apostle declares that all this comfort was of God. And he expresses it as though this were God's general disposition, in every such circumstance of his people, when he speaks of him as "the God of all comfort," and "the God that comforteth them that are cast down." We may safely understand, therefore, that wherever we find one of the Lord's followers, however great his weakness, however much cast down, we have in his case presented to us an opportunity of serving the Lord, of being channels of his mercy, and carrying to the downcast one something of comfort and consolation and helpfulness.

Speaking respecting his own course, the Apostle, in his first letter to the Thessalonians (2:11), gives us a little insight to his methods, and shows us that he neither domineered nor tyrannized over the church, nor continually harassed, threatened and upbraided them. On the contrary, he says, "Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you as a [proper] father doth his children." This familiar spirit in the apostles, which enabled them as fathers and as brethren in the church to comfort and assist, should be a guide now to all who would be servants of the Lord and helpful children of comfort—sons of consolation.

It is those who enter into this real Spirit of God, the real spirit of his truth, who are thereby proportionately prepared to comprehend the meaning of the prophecies and revelations of the Lord which are hidden to the worldly wise,—hidden to all who have not the spirit of Christ, the spirit of consolation, of helpfulness, of sympathy, of love. Possibly this is one reason why so few of the professed expounders of the Word of God meet with any success in interpreting it; probably this is one reason why so many are in darkness. They have not received the spirit of comfort and love, and therefore cannot appreciate the loving, gracious plan which the Word of God upholds. It probably was not by accident that the Apostle, when stating that we are to "grow in grace and in knowledge," put the grace first.

We have seen what it is to have the comfort of the brethren through the holy Spirit; let us inquire now what it is to have "the comfort of the Scriptures," which we are enabled to comprehend by the possession of the holy Spirit of comfort. We note again the prophetic statement of Isaiah (61:1), and that

while this applied primarily to our Lord, the head of the body, it must, therefore, necessarily also apply to every member of the body of the anointed. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon all the members, coming down to them from the head, upon whom the holy oil of anointing was poured; and it must be true of every member as of the head,—“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the good tidings; to bind up the broken-hearted [not to break hearts, but to heal the broken ones]; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”

As it is not our commission to break men's hearts, even the worldly, hard-hearted ones, but to leave them for the Lord to break through various disciplines and judgments; so likewise it is not appointed unto us to comfort those who do not mourn; nor is it our commission to specially cause mourning that we may comfort it. Our commission is to seek out the meek and the mourning ones, who have appreciated their own shortcomings and weaknesses, and who are looking for refuge and deliverance. It is part of our commission to point them to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, to point them to the beauty of the resurrection for the ashes of death, and the glories which the Lord has promised by and by to take the place of the spirit of heaviness and disappointment and sorrow and trouble of this present time. It is our commission to tell such that “Joy cometh in the morning,” and to assist them to arise and at once put on the garments of praise, and begin to walk in newness of life, with “a new song in their mouths—even the loving kindness of our God.”

It is the wrong thought which some good people get, that the Lord's children in this present time should be gloomy, morose, sad,—mourners for sin. Whoever has heard the Gospel message has cause for rejoicing. When the Lord said, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,” he said it in the Jewish age—under the law which condemned all imperfection, on account of which, therefore, all who were hungering and thirsting after righteousness and seeking to walk uprightly were necessarily in mourning for their sins, because of their inability to come up to the grand standard of the perfect law of God, and hence their inability to gain everlasting life under the conditions of that law. The Apostle represented not only himself but all sincere Israelites, groaning under the law, when he cried out, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this dead body?” (Rom. 7:24) He was mourning, and the Lord appointed that all the mourners in Zion should be comforted—comforted with the assurance that, while they were sinners and imperfect and could never justify themselves before God under the law, nevertheless, God himself had found a ransom, had redeemed his people. It is in view of this comforting assurance of the Gospel that the Apostle, after representing himself as the Jew, under the law, groaning and travailling, and crying for deliverance, in the next breath represents himself as the Christian who has found the deliverance, and exclaims, “Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” Shall the victors mourn, even though the victory be not entirely their own, but primarily bought with the precious blood of Christ? Nay, verily. We neither sorrow nor mourn, as do others, because of the good hope which is as an anchor to our souls, sure and steadfast—the hope of the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord's people, having embraced the truth, find themselves beset on every hand with oppositions from the Evil One and his servants; and were it not that they have the comfort and consolation of the Scriptures, and the joy and peace which the world can neither give nor take away, theirs would be a sad lot indeed. But under conditions, as the Lord has arranged them, it is their privilege, even while suffering the loss of earthly things for righteousness' sake, to rejoice in tribulation, and in everything give thanks.

What is the secret of this rejoicing in tribulation? Whence comes so great comfort as this? We answer, it comes through the comfort of the Scriptures, made luminous by the holy Spirit. For instance, take the inspired prophecy respecting Rachel

weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are not,—because they are dead. (Jer. 31:15-17) The Lord's message of comfort to Rachel, and thus to all who have suffered loss through the great penalty of death, is, “Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy little ones shall come again from the land of the enemy.” Does this speak peace and comfort to the wounded heart of the parent, thinking of his child that is dead? Yes, verily; it brings a consolation, a comfort, with which no error can compare. There are, indeed, various delusive fancies which picture themselves before the minds of the bereaved, in which they fain would trust and hope; but they are weak, they are intangible, they have no foundation in the Word of God. Hence they cannot give real rest or peace in such a time of trial.

But when we hear the voice of the Lord assuring us of the resurrection, assuring us that the grave is indeed the land of the enemy, assuring us,—not that our little ones are more alive than ever, but that, having gone to the land of the enemy, they are secure, because Jesus has prevailed, has bought the world with his own precious blood. Jesus has “the keys of death and of the grave,” as he declares (Rev. 1:18), and will shortly open and bring forth all the captive prisoners of death from the prison-house, the tomb. There is a comfort, a consolation, in this message, which can be applied with profit to every heart bleeding under such wounds.

All “the comfort of the Scriptures” is along this line. They show us that the present reign of sin and death is not to be an everlasting one; that a new dispensation is to be ushered in as the result of the great Redeemer's sacrifice, and that in this new dispensation a blessing shall come to all the families of the earth, and a special blessing to the church. Favored now with a knowledge of the Lord, the faithful of this time shall be made heirs with Jesus in the great kingdom work of blessing the world. Unquestionably this is a comforting assurance, not only for those who are striving to attain to the great prize of our high calling, but also for them in respect to those—their friends and neighbors—who shall be lifted up and blessed under that Millennial kingdom.

It is of this deliverance that the Apostle speaks, saying, that the Lord's people should not sorrow as others who have no hope, because if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, let us believe also the record of the Scriptures, that his death was a sacrifice on our behalf, and on behalf of the sins of the whole world,—so that them which sleep in Jesus will God bring from the dead by and through him. (1 Thess. 4:13, 14) What a blessed, comforting thought it is that the whole world of mankind, which went down into death in Adam, has been bought, so that the death penalty shall be repealed, and thus their death be turned into a sleep, from which all shall be awakened in the Millennial morning, to have an opportunity to learn of the goodness of God, and, if they will, to accept of his favor unto eternal life, by obedience.

Finally, we notice that the Apostle implies, in some of his statements, that the comfort and peace of the church are dependent largely upon unity of the spirit of the Lord in the various members: and that we from experience should note that this is the case. He says, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” (2 Cor. 13:11) And again (Phil. 2:1, 2), “If there be any consolation [comfort] in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” What exhortations these are to unity, peace, brotherly kindness! How they suggest to us patience, forbearance, gentleness, helpfulness and comfort one toward another in the church; that thus the spirit of the Lord may abound in all, that each may make the greatest possible progress in the right way. Dear brethren and sisters, let us more and more be worthy of the name Barnabas—Comforter of the brethren. Let us have the holy Spirit abounding in us more and more, for this is the Lord's good pleasure; that with it dwelling in us richly we may be all sons and daughters of comfort in Zion, representatives of our Father, and channels of the holy Spirit, as well as of the truth.

THE TIME OF HARVEST

Author of MILLENNIAL DAWN and Editor of ZION'S WATCH TOWER:—

Dear Sir,—Since you have changed your views respecting Gentile Times let me suggest the possibility of still another error. You count the seventy years Babylonian captivity of the Jews as beginning with the overthrow of Zedekiah, Judah's last king, but I notice that “Bishop Usher's Chronology,” given in the margins of our Common Version Bibles and based on “Ptolemy's Canon,” begins that seventy-year period nineteen years earlier—namely, in the first year of Nebuchadnezzar,

when he took captive Daniel and other prominent Jews and laid the Jews' country under tribute. Now if this, the common reckoning, be correct, it would make the Times of the Gentiles to begin nineteen years later than you estimate, namely, in B. C. 587, instead of B. C. 606;—and this in turn would make those times end nineteen years later than you have reckoned,—in October, A. D. 1933, instead of October, 1914. What do you say to this? Are you humble enough to acknowledge that I have struck some new light, and that you and all DAWN readers have been “all wrong,” walking in darkness?

We reply that there are too many *ifs* in the proposition, and that they are all abundantly contradicted by facts and Scripture, and are therefore not worthy the slightest consideration.

(1) The brother errs in supposing that we have changed our view of "Gentile Times." Those "times" or years are 2520, with a definite beginning in B. C. 606, and a definite ending, A. D. 1914. We know of no reason for changing a figure: to do so would spoil the harmonies and parallels so conspicuous between the Jewish and Gospel ages. The only "change" in view is that the anarchy to follow the ending of those "times" will not shorten them; and that the forty years "harvest" of the church will be complete and not be interfered with by the world-wide anarchy to follow it. This, as we have shown, makes the parallel with the Jewish age still more accurate; for the Jewish harvest of forty years ended in A. D. 69—prior to the complete anarchy amongst the Jews which came the year following.

The brother seems to further misunderstand us to teach that no great trouble will come before October, 1914 A. D. This is incorrect: we expect the great trouble of Rev. 13:15-17 before that date; but it will not be the world's trouble, the anarchy which will cause the "earth" society, to melt with fervent heat. It will be a trouble peculiar to the Lord's consecrated ones. In the past these two distinctly separate troubles were less clearly discerned than now. And this is just what we should expect—that the light shining more and more unto the perfect day would not be *contradictory*, but establish and clarify the truths already shown us, including the times and seasons.—Dan. 12:4, 10; 1 Thes. 5:1-4.

THE ERROR LONG SINCE EXPOSED

(2) In *MILLENNIAL DAWN*, Vol. II., pp. 36, 37, we were careful to note the unreliability of all ancient histories, and, after quoting various authorities conceding this, we added, last paragraph.—

"The Bible, our God-provided history of the first three thousand years, is the only work in the world which—beginning with Adam, the first man mentioned in history, monument or inscription, whose name, the time of whose creation and death, are recorded, and from whom his descendants can be traced by name and age in successive links for nearly four thousand years—furnishes us a clear and connected history down to a period where secular history is well authenticated. As we shall see, the Bible record extends to the first year of Cyrus, B. C. 536, a well-established and generally accepted date. There the thread of Bible chronology is dropped—at a point where secular history is reliable. God has thus provided for his children a clear and connected record down to the present time. . . . The Bible, therefore, is the chart of all history. Without it, as has been truly said, history would be like rivers flowing from unknown sources to unknown seas."

On page 52 of the same volume we said: "Usher dates the seventy years' desolation eighteen years earlier than is shown above—that is, before the dethronement of Zedekiah, Judah's last king—because the king of Babylon took many of the people captive at that time. (2 Chron. 36:9, 10, 21; 2 Kings 24:8-16) He evidently makes the not uncommon mistake of regarding those seventy years as the period of *captivity*, whereas the Lord expressly declares them to be seventy years of *desolation* of the land, that the land should lie 'desolate, without an inhabitant.' (Dan. 9:2; Jer. 26:9) Such was not the case prior to Zedekiah's dethronement. (2 Kings 24:14) But the desolation which followed Zedekiah's overthrow was complete; for, though some of the poor of the land were left to be vine-dressers and husbandmen (2 Kings 25:12), shortly even these—all people, both small and great—fled to Egypt for fear of the Chaldees. (Verse 26) There can be no doubt here; and therefore in reckoning the time to the desolation of the land, all periods up to the close of Zedekiah's reign should be counted in, as we have done."

From the foregoing it is evident that at the time of writing *DAWN II.* we were fully aware that "Ptolemy's Canon" and "Usher's Chronology" cut short the "seventy years" "desolation of the land," and counted them as but *fifty-one* years, Usher endeavoring to make the Bible account agree with "Ptolemy's Canon." We, however, have followed the Bible record exactly and persistently, and took secular history only where Bible history ended. We cannot make seventy years' *desolation of the land* into *fifty-one years' desolation* for the sake of harmony with Ptolemy. (Dan. 9:2; 2 Chron. 36:21) Indeed we reject all of Ptolemy's Canon back of the first year of Cyrus, 536 A. D.—the farther back it goes, the greater its errors.

"WHERE IS THE PROMISE OF HIS PRESENCE?"

(2 PETER 3:4.)

(3) Note the confusion that would result all along the line from the one change above suggested. It would extend the Jubilee antitype nineteen years, making the Lord's *presence* and "times of restitution" not due in any sense until A. D. 1874

plus 19—1893 A. D. On the contrary, it would shorten the Jewish age nineteen years, and thus, according to the parallels (*MILLENNIAL DAWN*, Vol. II., Chapter vii), would shorten the Gospel age also, and show the harvest as due (19 plus 19) 38 years before October, 1874,—that is to say, it would involve the idea of the Gospel "harvest" beginning 1836 A. D. and ending 40 years later, in 1876 A. D. And this would involve the thought of the Lord's *presence* in A. D. 1836, instead of 1874, the gathering of the sleeping saints in 1840, instead of 1878, and the end of the harvesting of the "wheat" in 1876, instead of 1914 A. D., as the time when the burning of the "tares" in the world's "time of trouble" would have been due.

All this confusion would result from an abandonment of the Bible narrative in favor of Ptolemy's Canon. Let those who want the darkness take it. Let those of us who have had our eyes of understanding opened rejoice in the true light more and more. As we have already seen, the "harvest" is a time for winnowing the "wheat"—a sifting, a separating time, and it is for each of us to prove our characters: "Having done all, stand!"

The tests of this "harvest" must be like those of the Jewish or typical "harvest." One of them is *the cross*, another is *the presence* of Christ, another is *humility*, another is *love*. The Jews were reproved because they "knew not the time of their visitation." (Luke 19:44) The matter is doubly distressing for those who have once seen the light of present truth, and afterward go into the "outer darkness" of the world. It implies unfaithfulness. "If the light that is in thee be [come] darkness, how great is that darkness."—Matt. 6:23.

Remember, dear brother, our Lord's words in the context: "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." An "evil eye" represents a mind perverted by anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife, ambition, etc. Such a mind's eye is sure to mislead the judgment which seeks to be guided by it. Those who have such an "eye" never would be drawn to the truth. But some drawn to the truth with a true eye—a true, honest, guileless heart—may become perverted through the cultivation of a wrong spirit, through selfishness, ambition or what not, and lose the true eye and soon lose the beautiful vision which enchanted them previously. The Lord explains the philosophy of the thing in the words, "Light was sown for the righteous, truth for the upright in heart."

HOW TO TEST THESE THINGS

First of all, go to the Lord in prayer, desirous of knowing the truth. Ask for the pure heart, for humility, for the wisdom which cometh from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. (Jas. 3:17) Next take up your *DAWNS*—the medium through which God has already blessed your study of his Word—with the Scriptures, and afresh prove all its teachings. In such an attitude of study we feel sure that you will be more firmly convinced than ever that the Lord's providence has specially guided in the preparation of these books for the present time—for the Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile.

Coming to Chapter vii. of Vol. ii., on the "*The Parallel Dispensations*," you will find it one of the most convincing proofs of the whole presentation. This is one of the tenfold cords of evidence which your suggested change, or any change whatever, would render useless, nonsensical.

Turn to page 232 of *DAWN II.* There you will see the reckoning showing the period of Israel's history from the death of Jacob to the death of Christ to be 1845 years. You will perceive that the seventy years' *desolation* are counted in the calculation. But if we were to accept "your theory," or rather the common theory built upon Ptolemy's and Usher's chronology, it would reduce this 19 years, and instead of 70 make it 51 years' desolation. This would reduce the result so that the entire length of Israel's history, being 1845 years, would be 19 years less, namely, 1826 years from Jacob's death to Christ's death in A. D. 32, where their "house" was left desolate, and forty days later at Pentecost, when the "house of sons" was instituted.

Now, then, notice that if the Jewish age was a type or pattern of the Gospel age the latter would be 1826 years long (1845 less 19) to the point corresponding to Christ's death, the point where Israel's "*Mishneh*" began to count, as pointed out by the Prophet, "Even today do I declare I will render double unto thee"—that "day" being clearly marked by the prophecy of the riding on the ass and the "shout." Now count 1826 years since A. D. 32 to find the Gospel age parallel. It would be 1858 A. D. What occurred then to correspond to the rejection of nominal Israel? Nothing!

Three and a half years prior (1854) would in this calculation correspond to or be the parallel to the beginning of our Lord's ministry, and should here represent the Lord's *presence*

and the *harvesting* time for gathering the elect "wheat" into the "barn." What occurred in 1854 to meet these requirements of the parallels? Nothing!

Forty years from the beginning of our Lord's ministry saw the full end of the Jewish harvest, in A. D. 69—followed by anarchy and destruction in A. D. 70. So the parallels demand that forty years from the beginning of the harvest and *parousia* here, the Gospel age should be fulfilled and the "wrath" be poured upon the nations. This would in this argument be 40 years from 1854, namely in 1894 A. D. What occurred at or before or since that date that would parallel the awful calamities that befel natural Israel, and what evidence is there that "the harvest is past, the summer ended and we are not saved?" None whatever!

On the contrary, how grandly all the prophetic periods agree with these parallels, and how irresistible is their "voice" to those who have "ears to hear." Frequent restudies of these testimonies of the Lord's Word will be profitable to us all; and none is grander, more faith-inspiring, more convincing than this Chapter vii. of Vol. II. on Parallel Dispensations. At best, as the Scriptures declare, we are leaky vessels, and the multitudes of cares of this life tend to crowd out the "Wonderful Words of Life" to such an extent that many on re-reading declare that they received as great, if not greater blessing than the first time. The Dawns are merely the Scriptures in rearrangement, with connecting comments; and hence it is no wonder that some write to us that they have read them as much as a dozen times and appreciated their lessons more each time. God's Word is new every morning and fresh every evening to those whose hearts are attuned to it, in the song of Moses and the Lamb.

"OH, THE BLESSEDNESS—THE 1335 DAYS"

A move of nineteen years, as the brother suggests above—or for that matter a change of even one year—would affect all the time prophecies of Vol. III. of the DAWN. The 1260 days, the 1290 days, the 1335 days, the 2300 days of Daniel, would all be thrown out of gear, out of the beautiful relationship shown in the Parallel Dispensations.

We all remember how we were thrilled when first studying we found that the parallels of dispensation showed that our Lord was due to be present in October, 1874, as the *exact parallel* of the beginning of his ministry and the "harvest" of the Jewish age; and how this thrill was intensified when we found the same date exactly marked by the Jubilee type; and how we almost shouted for joy when we found that Daniel's "1335 days" ended at precisely the same date; and, finally, how we repeated over and over the Prophet's words, "Oh, the blessedness of him that waiteth and cometh unto the 1335 days."

What a blessedness indeed! As the Apostle intimated it would be, so we have found it, "Times of refreshing!" Take away these parallels, disjoint this testimony by changing any part of the chronology, and you have a still mightier work before you;—the work of accounting for the rich spiritual food the Lord has been supplying to us *since October, 1874*—since the time of his *presence*, and in full accord with his promise that he would gird himself and become the servant of his true ones at his second *presence* and serve them "meat in due season," sending it at the hands of his faithful servants. We have dealt with this subject at greater length than it may seem to deserve, believing that it may stimulate some to follow the Apostle's exhortation, "Let us give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest we let them slip."—Heb. 2:1.

NAAMAN HEALED, GEHAZI SMITTEN

2 KINGS 5:1-14.—OCT. 23.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved."—Jer. 17:14.

The kingdom of Syria bordered the land of Israel on the north and east, and at the time of our lesson was quite influential amongst the nations of the earth. Sometimes it was in conflict with Israel, while at other times these two and other nations combined in their opposition to the Assyrian empire, a still more influential neighbor farther east. Naaman was the general in chief of Syria, noted for his personal ability as a soldier, and especially recognized by the king of Syria because at his hand the Lord had granted deliverance to Syria and Israel in combination against Shalmaneser II.

Naaman's victory is credited by this verse to Jehovah. (Jehovah is the original word wherever "Lord" is spelled in small capital letters throughout the common version of the Old Testament) We are not to gather from this that God has supervision of every war and every battle of earth, and that those who win have his favor and those who lose his disfavor. The Lord's favors were with the one particular nation, Israel, from the time of their adoption as the children of Abraham down to the time that, in our Lord's words, their house was left unto them desolate—divine favor withdrawn from them. The Scriptures, however, explain to us that the Lord did interfere with the affairs of outside nations to some extent—to use them as servants or tools for the accomplishment of his purposes. For instance, we are particularly informed in the Scriptures that on several occasions the Lord brought nations against Israel for the chastisement of his peculiar people, leading them captive into foreign lands, etc., as in the Babylonian captivity.

These interferences on the Lord's part were not by way of bringing salvation or the Gospel message to the heathen lands, but merely part and parcel of his dealings with Israel—the preparing of Israel to be his peculiar people, to be ready for the coming of Messiah. Again we see from the Scriptures that the Lord, while granting a certain lease of dominion to the kingdoms of this world, in the interim between the overthrow of the typical kingdom of Israel and the time for the establishment of the antitypical kingdom of spiritual Israel under the headship of Christ in Millennial glory, has, nevertheless, had a general supervision and figuratively has held operations under control—"Thus far shalt thou go but no farther"—the remainder will he restrain. When the Lord's time shall come for a full interference with the rule of this world, for the full putting down of all antagonistic authority and for the enforcement of righteousness in the world, it will be on a very different scale from anything that has ever yet transpired: Messiah, clothed with all power and authority, and having associated with him the overcomers of this Gospel age, will be the great king who, as Jehovah's Vicegerent, shall rule the nations with a rod of iron, laying righteousness to the line and justice to the plummet.

THE LITTLE BOND-MAID

On the occasion of one of the conflicts between Syria and Israel, the Syrians, being successful, carried away some spoil and loot, including young Israelites, who thus became bond-servants to the Syrians. One of these, a maid, became a servant in the house of Naaman, Syria's greatest general. Seeing him afflicted with leprosy—an incurable disease then as now—she suggested that in Israel was a great prophet of God, Elisha, of whom she had heard wonderful things, miracles, and who she was sure could heal her master, Naaman. We are not informed how serious Naaman's ailment was, but we do know that lepers, even under unfavorable conditions, often live long,—they have been known to live as long as forty-five years under the affliction. It is a repulsive disease, a wasting away or rotting of the part affected, an eating of the flesh, somewhat like a cancer, yet it is not generally painful until in the latter stages. It was just such a disease as a man of ability and activity like Naaman would be specially anxious to get rid of. His grasping at the suggestion of a little girl was possibly of the Lord's oversight, for ordinarily a man of his ability would pay little heed to such a suggestion of miraculous power in a neighboring country less in extent and influence than his own. Naaman evidently brought the matter to the attention of the king, who quite enthusiastically grasped the hope for the recovery of his favorite general. So a royal letter was written to the king of Israel, saying, "Now, when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have herewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy." We are to remember that the king of Israel, while professedly making some acknowledgment of Jehovah, was really an idolator, fostering in the kingdom false worship such as the Lord had not commanded. We are to remember that under these conditions he had no dealings with, and we may say scarcely any knowledge of, the Prophet Elisha, who made his home in the capital city of Samaria.

When King Jehoram read the letter he saw that it was expected of him that a miracle should be performed, and, rending his garments as an indication of despairing trouble, he declared that the king of Syria was merely making a pretext of this letter, seeking another occasion for war and to invade Jehoram's weaker dominions, to carry off more spoils and captives.

The news of this incident spread throughout the city, but possibly aside from this Elisha had a divine revelation respecting the status of the matter. Evidently conscious of God's power with him for such an emergency—perhaps directly instructed to this effect—Elisha sent word to the king, "Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothing?"—"wherefore be in despair? Let the Syrian stranger come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet of the Lord in Israel." King Jehoram was glad in such an emergency to direct General Naaman to the

Prophet, and doubtless did so with many assurances that the healing of lepers was not in the power of kings or princes or ordinary beings; but here was the man the little captive maid had evidently referred to, and that he wished for Naaman the best results. So General Naaman's cortege of horses and chariots drove over to the door of Elisha's house and there received a message from the Prophet, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean of thy leprosy."

We cannot wonder that Naaman was angry and indignant that a person of his rank should thus be lightly dismissed. It would be just like any worldly-minded person to be indignant under such circumstances: it requires the grace of humility to accept slights and indignities without appearing to notice them. We feel sure that it would not be the Lord's will that we, as his followers, should in any sense of the word duplicate or copy the manner Elisha displayed on this occasion. On the contrary, the very essence of Christian grace is declared to be love, which is kind, long suffering, patient, gentle, and which renders honor to those to whom honor is due, etc. The better the Lord's people can keep this in mind as a rule for daily life the larger generally will be their success in serving the Truth. Meekness, gentleness, patience, kindness, are all elements of Christian character, and must be cultivated if we would by present experiences be made fit for the heavenly kingdom.

We are not in this criticising Elisha and his course, for Elisha was not a Christian, having lived several centuries before the great Head came, before the redemptive work was accomplished, before the new and living way was opened up for us to walk in his steps. Elisha, as a Prophet, occupied a special position, and we do not know but that his conduct in this case was specially directed of the Lord and was particularly wise and suited to the conditions. Naaman did not comprehend that in calling upon Elisha he was really calling upon God, of whom Elisha was merely the servant. It was appropriate, therefore, that Naaman should learn the lesson, and he probably did learn it by the experiences referred to. In fact Elisha's course declared, "I am greater than you, because while you are the servant of the king of Syria, I am a servant of the King of kings, the Almighty; while, therefore, in harmony with my King's wishes, I shall grant the boon requested, I will do it in such a manner that you shall learn the lesson that you receive it as a favor and not, as you expect, in exchange for the expensive presents and rewards which you have brought with you."

As a general we might suppose that Naaman had considerable combativeness, and it manifested itself in his indignation at Elisha's course. To his companions and servants he expressed that indignation, declaring that he need not have come on a long journey to be told to go and wash himself, and that anyway the rivers of Syria were superior in sparkling purity to the Jordan. The latter was true, for the river Abana is noted for its crystalline, pellucid purity. Of its waters a writer says: "The Abana is no doubt the modern Barrada, the river to which the delightful oasis of Damascus owes its beauty and very existence; the Greeks called it the 'Golden Flowing.' It has the clearest waters possible, and singularly bright in color; in the morning a full, deep, emerald green, in the evening a sapphire blue. It was impossible not to think of the two jewels, so exactly did it resemble their clear gem-like lines at times."

The offended Naaman offered none of the presents he had brought for the Prophet, but indignantly started with his chariots homeward. Naaman's servants were able to take a calmer and more deliberate view of the situation than himself, because not so acutely interested. To them it seemed as though the Prophet had indeed exercised a great deal of dignity, as though he were the servant of a very great king indeed; to them this seemed all the more to support his claim of ability to heal the disease. Doubtless they reasoned, too, that the Prophet's home was not an extravagant one and he evidently was not greedy of filthy lucre, and asked no compensation for the receipt given. As the chariots rode homeward these matters were discussed, and Naaman greatly cooled off and began to take the more reasonable view of the situation, and was finally persuaded that while they had to pass the river Jordan anyway in the homeward journey he would follow the Prophet's directions, which could do no harm if they did no good. He did this, dipping himself seven times as directed, and with the seventh dip his flesh was healed of the leprosy, and his flesh and skin not only became healthy but fresh as that of a child—better than ever before. He was clean, his leprosy was gone.

LEPROSY A SYMBOL OF SIN

Leprosy is used in the Scriptures to symbolize sin, and was sometimes inflicted by the Lord as a punishment for sin, as, for instance, in the case of Miriam, Moses' sister, who was smitten with leprosy because of her improper attitude and disrespectful language to and about her brother Moses, in answer to whose

prayer she was healed. Sin is an incurable disease, and therefore well represented by leprosy; like leprosy it doth eat like a canker and all having it are "unclean." There are many suggestions as to how sin can be gotten rid of: there are philosophies which deny its existence, others which tell us that a moral life atones for sin. But these various philosophies, theories, suggestions, resemble the waters of Syria, which Naaman well knew could not make him clean, could not restore his health. The Word of God has pointed out to us the only cure for this malady of sin, the only channel through which forgiveness can be had—"There is none other name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved, but by the name of Jesus." However man may philosophize about the matter, sin is undeniable and its cure impossible except as the Lord will grant relief.

Another thought in connection with this: the likeness of the healing of Naaman's leprosy to the healing of sin is that the former required seven dippings into Jordan. We may well presume that each time Naaman dipped himself he looked for results, to see whether or not the leprosy was departing; but we may be sure there were no results until the seventh dip, and had he desisted with the fifth or sixth, saying, "It is useless, there is no improvement manifest," he would have failed of the blessing. The seven may well represent to us perfection: not that we are to either believe into Jesus seven times, nor to be converted seven times, nor to consecrate ourselves by baptism into death seven times; but that as seven represents perfection, the thought would be that our belief must be perfect or complete, our obedience must be perfect or complete, our baptism into death in Christ must be perfect or complete, otherwise there is no remission of sins, otherwise we would fail to get the blessings desired and promised. Let us impress this upon our hearts and minds and upon all with whom we have influence—that half-hearted consecration and obedience are not what the Lord is pleased to honor and to bless.

Several things connected with Naaman's experiences show us that the Lord's blessing of healing was conferred upon a man of naturally noble traits. First amongst these was the fact that his wife's maid, a servant, was interested in him and solicitous for his welfare. The love of the young, the innocent, the pure, is not always a sure test of character; but it should be given its weight when thinking of persons of whom we have not the fullest knowledge. Secondly, when Naaman found that his disease was gone he might have said to himself, "Well, I have received a great blessing and I have gotten it cheaply. If the Prophet had come down to me in a courteous manner and assured me of these results, or proffered to come with me, I fully intended that he should have a liberal gift, if not all the rich treasures which I have brought with me; but now, seeing that he did not put himself about so much as to come down to my chariot, I certainly need not put myself about to return many miles to Samaria and proffer him a gift. Perhaps, indeed, he would refuse it. I will go upon my journey and keep the stuff." Such a course would have shown us that Naaman was not a noble man, however successful he had been in winning the confidence of his king, and however much the Lord had used him in delivering Syria and Israel from the power of the Assyrians. Noble minds are not seeking selfishly to get all they can of this present life and give as little as possible to others. The truly great take pleasure in being just, yea in being generous. We may be sure that a generous heart is appreciated in the Lord's sight as well as in the estimation of truly noble men and women. In proportion as we see this let us each watch his own heart and mind and conduct, that each may thus bring himself nearer and nearer to the noble standard which the Lord and the best of his children approve.

We remember that during our Lord's ministry ten lepers cried to him as he passed, "Have mercy upon us, thou Son of David." They by this expression acknowledged him as the Messiah, the Root and Offspring of David, and they desired of the Lord healing from leprosy—very much Naaman's situation only that in the former case most of them were Jews. We remember that the Lord sent them on a journey during which they were all healed, but that only one of them returned to give thanks, to acknowledge his blessing. Our Lord commented on the fact and seemed to be deeply grieved with the ingratitude of the nine, and even pointed out that the one who did return and praise the Lord was not a Jew but a Samaritan—not an heir with Israel in the promises, but one of those outside the covenant favors of the Lord. Similarly Naaman was outside the covenant promises, a fact which is mentioned in the New Testament also as an evidence of God's mercy. We are told that there were many lepers in Israel at the same time that this noble Syrian was, by the Lord's favor, healed.

Let us, dear friends, see to it, being Israelites indeed, "heirs according to the promise," and having received of the Lord healing, forgiveness and blessing, that we are full of thankfulness,

full of gratitude, and that we spare no pains to express this, and that we do not seek to have it at no cost to ourselves, but rejoice to be able to render unto the Lord a fruit of his blessing and mercy and thank-offering—even as Naaman desired to do on this occasion, returning to Samaria to the Prophet and tendering him the gifts that he brought for the purpose. They were consecrated beforehand when he was hoping for blessing. Would he, after receiving the blessing, withhold any part? To have done so would have proven him unworthy of the blessing. Similarly the Lord's people, fleeing from sin and desiring forgiveness, reconciliation, etc., are generally disposed to make full consecration of everything to the Lord; but after receiving of his grace, if they attempt to keep back any or all of the consecrated earthly things, how would their course appear to the Lord and to all who had his light and the spirit of truth. Let us each measure our own hearts by this rule.

The silver and gold taken by Naaman as a present is estimated to have been the equivalent of \$77,540.00, and additionally ten costly or state occasion robes of considerable value. This was not considered too large a gift for the object desired and for the station or rank of the giver. The gift was proffered to Elisha with the words, "Behold, now I know there is no God in all the earth but in Israel: now, therefore, I pray thee, take a present of thy servant." But Elisha answered, "As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused." Had Elisha accepted the money he doubtless could have used it in connection with his mission as the Lord's prophet, or amongst the poor of Israel; nevertheless he evidently did better in refusing it. Thus also it is with those servants of the Lord who give of their time and talents to his service. It cannot be said that it would be wrong of them to receive compensation, salary: it could not be said that as servants of the Lord they were worthy of no compensation; yet we believe that as a rule the Lord will be more glorified if those serving him were more particular to keep the ministries of the truth entirely separate and distinct from all mercenary considerations. The Lord, who owns all the gold and silver and the cattle on a thousand hills, is able to provide for his work and for all of his servants, and we believe that he is more honored in their looking to him and trusting in his providences than in accepting anything in the nature of pay for the dispensing of his grace.

Naaman's acknowledgment of the God of Israel as the only true God was evidently not merely bombast, for forthwith he requested enough of the consecrated soil of Palestine for the building of an altar to the Lord, that he thus might in Syria present an offering on consecrated earth. Moreover, his mind had grasped the situation that now as a follower of the Lord, whose understanding had been opened, he could no longer with propriety do the things formerly done by him in false worship in association with his king. He inquired of the Prophet how the Lord would regard it if he went with the king of Syria into the temple of Syria's heathen god, Rimmon, the king leaning on his shoulder, and he be expected to bow himself with the king;—would the Lord pardon such conduct on his part or must he take still more decided grounds, utterly refusing to accompany the king?

The intimation seems to be given through the Prophet that Naaman would be justified in taking the usual course, as formerly, while in his own heart he would be serving the Lord and offering worship to him only. The point at issue seems to be that Naaman was not in all this an Israelite but still a Syrian—still a stranger to the covenant and promises of Israel, still without God and having no hope in the world. He might, therefore, do things with the king that would have been improper

for an Israelite to have done, because the latter was under special covenant relationship to the Lord. We are here reminded of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, mentioned in Acts 10. He was a man who feared God, gave much alms, sought to live righteously, soberly, and still—not being a Jew—he was an alien and a stranger so far as the covenant of Israel was concerned, as he could not be received into fellowship with the Lord until after the atonement sacrifice, until the end of the "seventy weeks" favor upon Israel, and even then only by hearing and believing the "words" of life and being begotten of the Spirit: so Naaman the Syrian, not living in so favored a time, could not be received at all into covenant relationship.

The noble conduct of this man, his candor, his apparent willingness to sacrifice everything for the Lord, puts to shame the course of many who by God's grace have become "Israelites indeed" and have been adopted into the divine family as sons. Many of them have very much less conscience on such subjects—many are much less careful about sailing under false colors, misrepresenting the Lord and the truth. Many, for the sake of earthly fame or position or present prosperity, are willing to sacrifice practically everything. Let us, dear readers, see to it that we place the Lord first in all our calculations, and that if we acknowledge and admire such honesty and sincerity in the heathen general, Naaman, much more should we find it in our own hearts, in our own conduct, and much more should the Lord expect of us in the way of obedience even unto death, obedience to right, to principle, to truth, to him.

GEHAZI'S DUPLICITY PUNISHED

On the other hand note the ignoble Gehazi, Elisha's servant, who though a witness to God's power through the Prophet had not been really and truly blessed by a proper character development. His heart was full of selfishness, and he grieved that the presents had not been received. He hastened after Naaman's chariot, and, by misrepresentations and lies in his master's name, received presents of considerable value—but he received more. The Prophet of the Lord, discerning the entire matter, pronounced against him as a penalty for his wrong course the leprosy of Naaman. So, we are sorry to say, there are some in daily contact with the truth and with the Lord's consecrated servants who do not partake of the spirit of the truth, nor of the spirit of the servants,—in whom selfishness is the ruling passion and who will, therefore, eventually not only fail to receive the great blessings, such as came to Naaman, but additionally will receive the divine disfavor, the second death.

Our Golden Text is not particularly related to the lesson, but, nevertheless, is very appropriate in connection with some of the inferences we have drawn from it. Those afflicted with the moral leprosy, sin, are here represented as calling to the Lord for the necessary healing, for the necessary salvation. The Lord heard our calling before we uttered it. Before we were born, yea, before the foundation of the world he had prepared an answer for our crying; he had prepared to answer the cry of all those who truly seek through him release from sin and its penalty, for Christ Jesus our Lord is declared to have been the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. Our salvation begins in the moment of our full acceptance of the forgiveness, but it continues through the remainder of the present life and will be completed with our participation in the glorious resurrection of the Millennial morning. Whoever, meantime, goes back voluntarily to sin, to "wallowing in the mire," or whoever meantime rejects the great Mediator, the only avenue of salvation, loses all—for there is no other name given under heaven or amongst men whereby we must be saved, no other way than by hearkening to his voice, his Word.

OUR UNSEEN GUARDIANS

2 KINGS 6:8-23.—OCTOBER 30.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."—Psa. 34:7.

Our lesson is based upon a miracle which the Lord wrought through Elisha the Prophet. As already noted, the kingdom of Syria lay to the north and east of the kingdom of Israel, and the two were not separated by natural boundaries, such as mountains, seas, etc. Consequently wars between the two countries were not infrequent. We recall that in one of these raids of the Syrians upon the Israelites, Naaman's wife's maid was taken captive. We recall that when Naaman came to the king of Israel the latter thought his coming merely a pretext for another war. Our lesson calls our attention to a later determination upon the part of the king of Syria to invade Israel, get spoils, etc. Several plans of attack were devised to raid one city or another, but each time these raids were frustrated, for the Syrian army found the cities they attacked freshly prepared for defence. The king concluded there was a traitor in his

court or camp who disclosed his secret plans and arrangements to the king of Israel, and instituted a search for the traitor. His counsellors, however, had heard of Elisha—perhaps through Naaman or those who accompanied him at the time of his healing. These explained to the king of Syria that a more likely interpretation of the matter was that the Prophet Elisha revealed to Israel's king all plots and schemes against the interests of the nation.

Although the king was evidently a man of force, he was not wise in his determination to ascertain the location of Elisha and to capture him first, and thus to secure a free hand in looting the cities of Israel. He might have known that if Elisha could inform the king, he could be equally well informed in matters respecting himself. But thus it is with all who leave the wisdom of God out of their calculations. The Apostle sums up