

A PROPHECY NEARING FULFILMENT

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."—Hab. 3:17, 18.

Habakkuk's entire prayer, recorded in this chapter of his prophecy, is so symbolical that it would be scarcely in keeping with it for us to give the words of our text the plain, simple interpretation that we would be otherwise inclined to give. This simple interpretation would be that although the conditions were such that famine stalked everywhere, and there was nothing of earthly hope, nevertheless God's people at any time and in any place would rejoice in God and give him the glory.

It would seem very strange, however, if the Prophet should wind up the whole chapter, so highly symbolical, with anything so plain and literal as we have suggested. With so much imagery in his mind, it would seem but reasonable that the words should be interpreted in keeping with their context, and that we should regard it as the Prophet's expression of some deep truths. Much of the language of the Bible is figurative; and in our common conversation we also use many figures. For instance, in the Scriptures a vine is a figure used for the church: As our Lord said, "I am the vine; ye are the branches."—John 15:5.

The flock of God—the sheep—are common figurative expressions for the same class. Our Lord speaks of the little flock. We are his sheep. The Jews were also referred to as God's sheep, by the Psalmist David, in Psalm 74:1; 79:13, etc.

So with the word olive. The olive tree is mentioned by St. Paul in referring to the special people of God, his peculiar people—those in relationship with him. He speaks of the natural olive tree—shows that the promise applied originally to the Jewish nation: "In thee [Abraham] and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." He says that because of unbelief the natural branches were broken off. Thus we locate the vine and the olive both as representing the church of Christ, from different points of view.

When the little flock shall have passed beyond the vail, there will still be the great company of the Lord's people left here. Many of these will apparently continue in Babylon until the time of trouble shall cause Babylon to fall. And by the fall of Babylon these will be set free. Before all this is made plain to them, they may use the language of our text, and later come to see clearly. In the 19th of Revelation this company are spoken of as rejoicing in the fall of Babylon and saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." (Vs. 7.) All things had seemed to them to be failures; and now they see that God's plan has not failed, but has been fulfilled.

EARTHLY GOVERNMENTS A FAILURE

The church has not yet blessed the world. The fruit of the vine will feed the world in the coming age. Neither the olive nor the vine will give life to the world at the present time. This will come in the new dispensation, during the Messianic reign.

The Lord has used the word field to represent the world: "The field is the world." The world have been hoping to better their affairs. They have been hoping to manage matters successfully. And so the various universal empires have sprung up. First the Babylonians tried to give the world a better government, but their efforts were of no avail. Then the Medes and Persians tried, and also failed. Next the Greeks and later the Romans took the reins of universal government, and likewise failed. Finally Papacy came forward, claiming to be the kingdom of Christ that would rule the world. She failed. Of late years Socialism has come to the front, saying that it can better the world, but the prospects for social improvement are no better.

"NO HERD IN THE STALLS"

The expression, "herd in the stalls," seems a little obscure. The Scriptures liken our Lord Jesus to a bullock—and in the coming age mankind, on reaching perfection, will be symbolically represented by a bullock. The suggestion of the Prophet David is that mankind then shall offer bullocks on God's altar. (Psa. 51:19.) This cannot refer to the church in the present time; for in the Atonement Day type the church is represented by a goat, and our Lord—a perfect man when his sacrifice was made—is represented by a bullock. But in the end of the next age, when the world shall be perfected, they shall offer bullocks on the altar. This

represents how mankind will make a full consecration of themselves, their perfect powers.

We know nothing better in the application of the bullock than that suggested by the Psalmist. At the close of this Gospel age, when all the church shall have passed beyond the vail, there will be no perfect men. In other words, there will be a point of time when the church will be glorified and when the ancient worthies will not yet have appeared. The people will stand amazed, not seeing any way out of their troubles. Only those who have the light of the Lord's Word will be able to appreciate the condition at all.

Those who will then understand—the great company—will rejoice in the Lord. They will be able to trust in God, even though conditions in the world are distressing, and the ancient worthies not yet here to take hold of matters. They will see that the conditions are really leading up to the great blessing—that the great time of trouble is the necessary preparation for blessing. And they will say, Let us rejoice and give glory to the Lord, for the bride hath made herself ready! We see in this glorification of the church the beginning of the great blessing. Soon we may expect to see the ancient worthies here. Then will come the fulfilment of all God's gracious promises. So we will not lose heart, but will trust in the Lord.

Our Lord Jesus spoke of the great company—the foolish virgin class—in his sermon on the mount. (Matt. 7:21-23) After the last member of the little flock has gone beyond the vail, the great company will be thoroughly awakened and will say, "Lord, Lord, may we not come in? We are ready now, dear Lord; we see where we have made our mistake. We see matters differently; we realize what privileges and opportunities for sacrifice we once enjoyed, but missed. May we not enter even now?" But the Lord will answer, "Depart from me. I do not recognize you." This word depart does not mean that they will depart into eternal torment, as we once thought. The Lord does not say, "Depart, ye cursed," for cursed means to be set apart for punishment. He merely says, "Depart from me."

The kingdom of heaven is elsewhere (Matt. 25:1-12) likened unto ten virgins who took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Five of them were wise and took oil in their vessels with their lamps; but five were foolish virgins and took no oil with them. When the Bridegroom came, the foolish virgins said to the wise ones, "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out." But they could not do so, they had enough only for their own lamps. After the wise virgins had entered with the bridegroom, the door was shut. Then came the other virgins saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us!" But he answered, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

These words of our Lord, "I know you not," do not mean that these were not virgins. What do they mean? He means that, having recognized his bride, He does not know any other woman. These were desiring to be recognized as a part of the bride. And the Lord says, I do not recognize you. My bride is complete. So the foolish virgin class are rejected from a place in the bride class, but they are received as associates and assistants. Their rejection will give them cause for grief. Realizing that the door of opportunity is closed to them, they will cry, Oh, we have lost the great prize! They may become despondent. We do not know.

SORROW TURNED INTO JOY

But this great company are afterward pictured as saying, Let us be glad! Let us rejoice! Let us glorify God, because the bride has been taken! Should any one say to them, But you are not of the bride class, their reply might be: Nevertheless, the blessings are coming to all—even to us! The bride class are the first-fruits of God's people. It is our own fault that we failed to get into the bride class. If we had seen a while ago as we now see, we would have striven harder and we should not have failed. We would not have listened to what Babylon had to say, We would have "run with patience the race set before us." We were stupefied by the "doctrines of demons." (1 Timothy 4:1) We are glad that we are now awakened. We rejoice that God's plan is being so gloriously outworked. Our lamps are burning now. We are blessed as never before. Let us be glad and rejoice in that the bride is glorified.

"CUT OFF FROM THE FOLD"

"The flock shall be cut off from the fold." As applied to the elect church, this is viewed from the earthly standpoint. There is an earthly fold and a heavenly fold. We are now in the fold on earth. We must die in order to enter into the glory that is promised us—to enter into the heavenly fold.

Our Lord Jesus was cut off from the earthly fold when he died. And as with our Lord, so with us. We must be cut off

from the fold here before we can enter into the fold above. It may appear to the great company for a time as though all things are failing, and not coming to pass; but from God's standpoint the fig tree will be budding and the olive will be bringing forth her fruit. There will be no miscarriage of God's purposes. The church will reach her full glorification, and then the vine will bear glorious, ripe fruitage for all mankind.

PASTORAL ADVICE ON PRAYER AND TESTIMONY

The new creation needs a special meeting of a devotional kind once a week for prayer and testimony. We believe that the friends would find it very profitable to set aside at least one night in the quarter as a prayer meeting in a very general sense. Our suggestion has been that the middle Wednesday evening of the quarter be the one selected for this purpose. This meeting should be devoted to prayer rather than to testimony. It may be opened with a prayer by the leader, who could then call for two or three prayers. Afterward he might read the text for the week, and comment upon it for about three minutes; or if the class were very small, comment about five minutes; if very large in numbers, about two minutes. The length of the comment would be according to the size of the class.

Then the leader might say, This is the evening we have arranged to be especially for a prayer service. We have all found, no doubt, that it is a special privilege for the Christian to worship the Lord, to offer prayer, praise. With the heart, we believe; with the mouth, we confess. During this service we prefer not to call by name, but desire that all present participate. If you have only a few words, no matter. Indeed, we would rather encourage the thought that the prayer should not be too long. Now we will give opportunity for three to rise—two brothers and one sister; after that we will have a hymn; following the hymn we will have another opportunity for prayer—one brother and one sister (according to the general make-up of the class), and thus give an opportunity all around.

We find that a great blessing comes to the Lord's people from the exercise of the privilege of prayer. They need to be encouraged, for many of them have not had such encouragement in their earlier life experiences.

We think that once a quarter for the special prayer service would serve the purpose better than once a month. More than once a quarter might prove tedious; and if such order has been followed in any class, we recommend that it be changed.

A MODEL TESTIMONY MEETING

As a rule the mid-week meeting should be set aside for praise and testimony. As before stated, the Christian needs a special devotional meeting, with opportunities for relating his experiences. Up-to-date testimonies are very helpful. All the Lord's people have trials and difficulties, and by hearing of one another's experiences, we learn to sympathize with each other.

Such meetings should begin with a hymn or two, followed by one or more short prayers. The brother who is to open the meeting with prayer, should be instructed before the meeting what to do and what not to do. And the opening prayer should be merely a request for divine blessing upon the hearts and the minds of those assembled, that they might be in the right condition to receive the Lord's blessing.

Suppose that the text for the evening read, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time." The leader would say something like this: Our text for the week reads thus (here read the text). . . . Apparently, in God's sight the quality of humility is one of the most important qualities for any one of his people to possess. The entire Scriptures seem to indicate that when we have humility we are pleasing in God's sight; and that unless we have this quality we could never be fit for the kingdom. We can see the wisdom of this requirement, too; for if God should exalt to a high position those who are not humble, it might lead to further difficulty in heaven.

We can see that Satan was not properly submissive to God. After he had gotten into this proud condition he probably thought that he could do better than God; and in his endeavor to show what he could do, he brought his own downfall and brought the human family into sin and death. No wonder, then, that God required Jesus to show that he had submitted himself to the Father's will. We see the course of Jesus in this matter, and how the Father afterwards exalted him. It is for us to submit ourselves to everything which God's providence brings to us. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

Now, dear friends, perhaps you may have something to tell us of your experiences this week, along the line of humility, or its opposite—pride. This is not to be a dissertation on Scripture. We already know what the text means. We want you to tell us of your own personal experiences. What experiences have you had that have tended to impress this Scripture on your mind? Let us have some little page from your personal experience. We will begin with Brother A, and then have Sister B, and then will alternate between the two sides of the room, and thus progress. Will you give us your testimony, Brother?

HOW TO GET DOUBLE EFFECT

By following the method of calling upon one here, and one there, we get double effect. If the testimony begins at one end, some who are far away might think: Oh, it will not come my turn for a long time! But if the method is adopted of calling one here, and then one there, and there and here, it makes all more alert, and will keep them awake to the whole subject.

In leading a testimony meeting myself, we keep the thought in mind that we want a good testimony to begin with and a good testimony to close with. So we start with some one who will give a good, wide-awake testimony, and thus give a good impetus at the beginning. When we are singing the opening hymn, we have in mind Brother So-and-so, or Sister So-and-so, to begin with or to end with. And thus we are sure of having a good beginning and a good ending.

If in the middle of the service there are some who seem to stumble a little, and do not seem to know how to proceed, we say, We understand, then, brother (or sister) that your experience has been thus and so. We would take what we surmise to be his real thought, and state it for him, if we think he is unable to complete it. We should be able to do this. Any leader ought to be able to do so, and thus kindly to encourage him.

We would be careful not to make it so rankly different from the thought that the brother or sister will feel like saying, Oh, that is not it at all! But we try to give his thought so that he could say, Brother Russell understands my thought! But if we should look sour and say nothing, the brother (or the sister more especially) might feel too much discouraged to try at all the next time, thinking that she might better keep quiet.

In a testimony meeting, where there are sixty to one hundred present in the class, there is not the best opportunity for the most helpful meeting. The most profitable number would seem to be twelve to fifteen. Then there is sufficient variety, and none too much time to spare, yet enough time for all to testify.

If the first who testifies has a wrong thought or course of action, he may say: This week I had a conversation with a preacher who thinks that he knows a great deal about Scripture—I asked him several questions, which he could not answer; and all the people could see that he could not answer at all!

The leader might say to him, Brother, I have no doubt that you meant that well, but I am not so sure that you did it wisely. It might have been better if you had done it gently. We are not to be rude, but gentle, in meekness instructing those who oppose. You must remember that it would be a very difficult matter for a man of years, of standing, of education and reputation to see these things. You should, therefore, be doubly on guard not to arouse antagonism. So I would advise that in a case like that, we would simply drop a little word, and this word would be more in harmony with the suggestions of gentleness, meekness. In speaking as you did, that minister might have thought that you were not humble enough.

There might be another one who would have the thought all twisted in another way. The art of testifying well is one that the leaders of testimony meetings should cultivate in the class. They should have right ideas about these matters, so that the class would get proper thoughts as to how to deal with what comes up. In this way they have something fixed in their minds.

TESTIMONY MEETING NOT FOR A DISCOURSE

If one attempts to give a sermon, the leader might say, Excuse me, Brother, but this is not a meeting for a discourse. This is a testimony meeting. Perhaps at some other time you can speak more at length.

It might be well for the leader to give in advance a definition of what a testimony is, something as follows: Presumably we all know what a testimony is. It is not a discourse or a dissertation on Scripture. This is a meeting especially for testimonies. I will give a dissertation myself on the text for the evening, now, at the beginning; but later we will wish to have the personal experiences of the friends.

We take it for granted that all the friends mean well; anything that is not just in order is not seen by them to be out of order. But by the leader's remarking that he would read the text and give a few words regarding its signification, and would then hear testimonies, they will see what is expected. By the leader's giving his own personal testimony at the close of the meeting, they will also get the proper thought.

Our thought is that it would not be best for the friends to depart for their homes with any unseemly haste, but to tarry for a word of greeting. That is our custom. We do not know any Scripture bearing directly upon this subject, and we would have no right to lay down a rule or law; we merely give the suggestion that nothing would be gained by entering into too much conversation at the close of the service. There is a danger of the after-meeting crowding out the benefits and blessings of the service. Of course, if they leave promptly the friends have not so much opportunity for fellowship, unless they come a little earlier—a little ahead of time—to the place of meeting. If some can do this it would not be amiss for them to have a little friendly interchange before the coming of the leader, and before the hour for meeting. This would seem to be a very profitable opportunity.

PROPER ATTITUDE IN PRAYER

Nothing in the Scriptures limits the Christian as to the attitude of his body when he goes to the Lord in prayer. Standing and kneeling are both mentioned. One would have to be guided by the spirit of a sound mind. If he were out on the street, it would surely be undesirable to kneel. If he were on a stone floor, it might also be undesirable to kneel. If he were in private, it would seem best to kneel in prayer. Some have told us, however, that when they get upon their knees they are likely to get very sleepy. We would wish to be in that attitude which would enable us best to think of what we are doing. If we found that on our knees we were apt to grow sleepy, we would assume some other attitude which would keep us awake and attentive to prayer.

As for congregational prayer, it is our thought that it can generally be best observed sitting, with the head bowed. Of course, the preference of attitude is largely a matter of education, of habit. It has been our thought to say to the friends everywhere, that in public service this attitude would best be observed during prayer. Where the gathering is small and there is a carpet on the floor, it might be as well to kneel.

As for testimony meetings, it is our opinion that unless the class be a large one, it is better that they sit when testifying; for by remaining seated the giving of a testimony is easier. A difficulty with some in giving a testimony is that they rise and, becoming embarrassed, forget what they are going to say. So it reduces the nervous excitement of some to remain sitting. In a large meeting, it would be better for the person to stand, so that the voice can reach all.

STANDING DURING CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

In the matter of singing, we believe that the custom of standing, which prevails in Great Britain, is a very good one. It would seem to be too much to stand during a praise service, where a number of songs follow each other. But standing in singing has its advantages generally. A person in standing is

putting himself in a distinctive attitude; and he can sing better because of thus putting his vocal cords in better position. It is desirable, therefore, when a hymn is announced, that the friends stand.

The invitation to rise should always be given in an appropriate way and not in a peremptory manner. The leader should not say, The congregation will rise, but, Let us rise and sing. There might be some who are in such physical condition that they would better remain sitting; hence the invitation, Let us rise and sing, is particularly intended for those who wish to rise. We think it would be a great mistake to say, Let us rise and sing, and then add—as some do—Let us remain standing while Brother A offers prayer. This might in many cases be imposing a real hardship.

TOO MUCH SELF-CONCEIT

But in the closing hymn, if the audience rise, then instead of having them sit down for the closing prayer, it would be well to remain standing, and the prayer should be merely in the form of a benediction, which should not be distressing in length to anybody. If there had been one prayer before, there would not be further necessity for more than could be offered in a few words. Most prayers are too long.

One who is leading in prayer should not interfere with the liberties and rights of the entire congregation by the length of his petitions. We do not read that our Lord made very long prayers. It is true that he sometimes continued all night in prayer, alone; but he offered no lengthy prayers in public. The "Lord's Prayer" is quite brief and to the point. Those people who think they should tell the Lord all about how he should run the universe, have too much self-concern, too much self-conceit. When we learn how poorly we are able to run ourselves, it should make us very slow to advise the Almighty as to how to manage his affairs.

FORMAL PRAYER OFTEN MOCKERY

A Boston newspaper, in referring to a prayer offered by a prominent minister, stated the next day that Rev. ——— delivered the most eloquent prayer ever offered to a Boston audience! The Editor evidently knew that the prayer was not addressed to the Lord! We need to have much of the spirit of a sound mind. We presume the Lord sees that all our intentions are good. But he has not told us that we are to pray to be heard of men. We are to pray to the Lord.

In private prayer we are told to "enter into thy closet," and we suppose that no one should pray in a tone that could be heard outside the door. Prayer, either in private or in public, is to be addressed to the Almighty, in reverent terms, and should express the desire of the heart appropriate to the occasion. We should know for what we are going to the Lord. It would be better that we should not go to the throne of grace unless we have something that we wish to say.

At the close of any meeting we think it would be very unwise for the speaker to pray for ten or fifteen minutes, or even five minutes. Two or three minutes would be an abundance, we think. The Lord knows about all our needs, and we should have consideration for the congregation.

It is something of a matter to sit for an hour, and then to prolong the service by a lengthy prayer is unwise. Lengthy prayers should be offered in private. Some Christians, however, need to be encouraged along the line of prayer—some are not disposed to pray as much as they should. Prayer is a most wonderful privilege, but one that should not be abused by endless repetition of the same thoughts.

"We will watch while we pray,
With our lamps trimmed and burning;
We will work while we wait,
Till the Master's returning;
We will sing and rejoice,
While each omen discerning."

FAITHFULNESS IN OUR STEWARDSHIP

"It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."—1 Cor. 4:2.

Every great business enterprise employs various classes of workers. This does not imply that the firm approves of all the moral qualities of their employees. They may employ some laboring men who are of good moral character and some who are of poor character; for they do not hold the working men responsible in that sense. But the most responsible positions are given to those of recognized good character.

So God makes use of different agencies to do his service. These are sometimes animate, sometimes inanimate. (Isaiah 45:1-4; Jer. 10:13) But those whom he recognizes as specially his servants are the church of this Gospel age—a special class of servants on special terms and agreements. These special servants are also called sons; that is to say, they are adopted,

and promised that they will be fully inducted into the divine family if they are faithful in God's service in the present time.

These servants represent a stewardship—a term common in olden time. The servant did with his master's goods as though they were his own. At the same time, while given this privilege, he was required to give an account to his employer. The master did not give him these goods and say, Use them as you like, and I will call for them when I want them. On the contrary, his stewardship was to be a faithful one, and would be examined later with this end in view—to see if he had been faithful. A faithful steward would be on the lookout for everything that represented the master's interests—would be as careful of these as he would be of his own. He would use his

every power for increasing the talent—represented by the money in his care.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

In the parable of the talents the Lord represented a man as going into a far country and leaving the talents in the care of his stewards. They were entrusted with these goods in a very special way. Thus it is with us. Each of us is entrusted with certain talents. At the time of consecration we gave our all to God. Having given all that we have and are to the Lord, he accepts our offering and appoints us his stewards over these goods—these things that we had. This would include our all—time, influence, various talents—for business, music, or what not. All these are the Master's after we have made consecration. We belong to Christ. He is the head, he is Lord. But he commits to us as his faithful servants all these talents, to use for him. And he says, "Occupy till I come."

This parable applies to all the church all the way down this age. Each servant is to be diligent in occupying the position of steward until he is released from it. The steward who would use his position merely to glorify himself would not be a faithful steward. The faithful steward would be the one who would desire to so use the talents as to increase the Master's wealth, the Master's glory.

The Lord gave an illustration of the faithful and unfaithful stewards at his second coming—before he will deal at all with the subjects of the kingdom—mankind in general. He showed how he will call these servants to whom he has given the talents; for he has promised them that he will make them rulers with him in his kingdom, if they are faithful in the use of their talents. In the parable, the one who received five talents doubled them, and made them ten. The one who had received two talents made them four. But the one who had received one talent gave the excuse that he had buried it in the earth, because afraid. And he was declared to be an unfaithful servant.

This servant was not sent to eternal torment, but the talent was taken from him. It was of his own volition that he became a steward. Seeing that he had become a steward, he deserved to be punished because he did not use that which his lord had entrusted to him. That talent belonged to his lord.

An unfaithful steward will be punished for his unfaithfulness. Better that we should not enter into the Lord's service at all than that we should enter and then hold back, neglect our opportunities. If the one who had the five talents had held back, his simply doing nothing would have made him responsible. In showing how he dealt with the one who had the one talent, the Lord is emphasizing the matter the more. These talents represent our opportunities for service according to our several abilities. The one who had less ability was given less opportunity than the one who had more ability.

So with us. Some may have handicaps of various kinds. Some have more talents, or abilities; some have less. We cannot use talents we do not possess. It is required of a man that he be found faithful with what he has. This matter of using all the talents calls up the thought of full, complete loyalty of heart devotion. We should not say, I am doing better than somebody else, as the man with five talents might have thought had he used but three or four of them. But the one who is using his talents to the full capacity is specially pleasing to the Lord. Those who have two talents and use them faithfully receive the same commendation as the one who has five talents and uses the five.

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD

The parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1-9), which impresses this same lesson, was primarily addressed to Jesus' disciples, in the presence of the Pharisees and those who sat in Moses' seat, who were the representatives of the divine order of things in the Jewish age. In this parable the Lord emphasizes the fact that a wise steward would be alert to his own future welfare. If a debtor could not pay one hundred per cent., but could pay fifty, it would be wise for the steward, in consideration of his own interests, to keep the future good will of the man, and let him pay half. This steward was commended by his lord for his shrewdness in taking this course, even though he had previously been unfaithful to him.

The Scribes and Pharisees are scored in the parable. Our Lord's words intimated, You know that you are not yourselves able to pay the divine requirements of the Law—you are not able to pay fifty cents on the dollar, and you ought to feel sympathetic with some of these poor Jews who cannot keep the law. You should say to them, Cut it down somewhat—keep half the law, if you cannot keep it all. Can you keep half? Yes? Well, go ahead and keep half.

But, said the Lord, you despise all these—you do not

want to "brush garments" with them as you pass them in the streets. You know that you cannot keep the law yourselves. You are in the position of the steward of my parable. You should take the same course as that steward took with his master's debtors. He was about to be dispossessed. So you are near the end of your term. When you get out of office the people will not think much of you. You would better help your case out. You sit in Moses' seat. You should tell your brethren that while they are not keeping the law in full, they are pretty nice people; and you should encourage them to do the best they can. You should help them along.

After giving this parable respecting the Pharisees, Jesus turned to his disciples, saying, "I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness." That is to say, Applying this to yourselves now, consider that your earthly possessions are an earthly stewardship. Live in harmony with the people as far as justice will permit. Do not in any way exact the last thing possible from them. Be generous in all your affairs—not only in financial matters. Instead of condemning everybody and threatening them with eternal torment, tell them that God is very merciful. Tell them that God has provided a Redeemer for all mankind. Tell them to be of good courage and to do the best they can—that they may be sure that God through Christ will be very merciful, and that they will have better dealings at his hands when the time of their testing shall come.

By teaching the people thus, we may get the ill-will of the scribe and Pharisee class; but we are getting the good will of the people and of those who are in harmony with God and righteousness. And although we may be excluded from the high functions of the nominal systems, many of the common people are hearing gladly and sympathetically, and are wishing to share their homes with us. And so we have homes all over the world, wherever God's people are; for they have the ear and eye to appreciate the Lord's arrangement. Furthermore the Lord himself will ultimately receive us into everlasting habitations. We are wise stewards in this respect. We are living so as to use our time and strength to the best of our ability to do good and to instruct others to do good.

TWO PARABLES COMPARED

The parables of the talents and of the pounds are much alike, both representing a great householder, or lord, dealing with his servants. In the parable of the pounds, a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. This parable is based upon the fact that when an under-king, like King Herod, would hear that a new Emperor had come to the throne of Rome, he would be anxious for a re-appointment to his own kingdom. Knowing that the Emperor had power to reinstate him, he would be desirous to know whether he would receive his kingdom again, or whether someone else would receive the place. So when such under-king went to Rome, it was with the view of returning with his kingdom, or a commission from the new Emperor.

Our Lord in this picture represents himself as a Nobleman who had been called to a throne, and who was going to a far country, to heaven itself, to receive the investiture of his kingdom. In due time he was to be the great Messiah; and he must first be invested with the authority, and then return and establish his kingdom.

In the parable of the talents, the lord, before leaving, called in his servants and committed unto them his goods, his property. He said, I will make these servants stewards. He gave one talent to one, two talents to another, and five to still another, according to their several ability. They were all remembered. When he returned he called his servants and reckoned with them. The one with two talents came and said, Lord, thou gavest me two talents. Here I make my report. I have gained two other talents. The one with the five talents said, Lord, thou gavest me five talents; lo, I have gained other five! I have doubled the amount and gotten ten! The lord said to each, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Enter thou into the joys of thy Lord. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things."

Then came the servant with only one talent. Although he returned it, he had failed to use it. He said, I have not lost a penny; here is thine own. His Lord said unto him, Thou art a slothful and wicked servant! The servant was punished because he was unfaithful.

OPPORTUNITY MEASURES RESPONSIBILITY

The Lord gave this parable as an illustration of our experiences now. These talents consist of opportunities. To illustrate: We recently had the talent, or opportunity, of speaking the truth to 5,000 people. Therefore we had a re-

sponsibility. But if we do not have such an opportunity, we do not have the responsibility of it. This is what the Lord meant, we understand. One may have more opportunities granted him than another. One person might be a good writer; another a good speaker; another a good exhorter; and another may be good at all three of these things. The one good at all three would have thereby three times as much responsibility as the one with only the one ability.

The talent in Bible times represented a certain amount of money. According to the most recent figures available (Am. Bib. Soc'y, 1895), the talent mentioned in the Scriptures was either gold or silver. The value in U. S. money of the gold talent is \$32,689, while the silver talent was but \$1,563.37. Our Lord, however, used the talent, not to represent gold or silver, but as well representing the opportunities his people have to do God's will and to serve the brethren; for he says that whoever does good to one of the least of his will receive a blessing.

The lesson taught in the parable of the pounds seems somewhat different. In this the lord gave each of his servants one pound, to do what he could with what was given him. One gained five pounds, and one gained ten. The third gained nothing. The pound (mina, or maneh), is equivalent, if gold, to \$6,637.80; if silver, \$312.67½.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ONE POUND TO EACH

In this application of the parable, to our understanding, the pound represents the blessing of justification given to each of God's children. When did he give us the pound? When he accepted us as his servants. When did he accept us as servants? We were not servants when we first turned from sin. To turn from sin is not to become a servant. The first step toward God is to turn away from sin toward righteousness, and to attempt to draw nigh unto God; for God says, "Draw nigh unto me and I will draw nigh unto you."

REST FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."—Exod. 33:14.

We are not to think of our heavenly Father as literally walking through the wilderness with the children of Israel, as leaving the affairs of the universe and going with them in their journey. Nor are we to get the thought that God is everywhere at the same time. This unscriptural thought has been the foundation for much error. Christian Scientists say that God is everywhere—in every piece of wood, of china—in everything. When we ask what they mean, they say that since the word God simply stands for good, and since there is good in everything, therefore God must be in everything; for God means good and must be everywhere, even in every atom of matter. So on this erroneous doctrine of God's omnipresence they build their theory. But theirs is not the Scriptural thought.

The Scriptural thought is that God specially manifests his power and love to his people. God is in heaven; the earth is his footstool. But by his various powers and agents, and by his intelligence and knowledge, he can be as if present everywhere—through his angels, his messengers. Just as we by the telegraph and the telephone can have communication with the uttermost parts of the earth, so God can exercise his power in every part of the universe.

The words of our text, we remember, were the Lord's answer to Moses when that great statesman was in perplexity. He had been commanded to go forward as the leader of Israel, and through divine favor to bring them into the land of Canaan, there to give them rest.

From the beginning of the wilderness journey, there was more or less of disinclination or fear on the part of the people. They realized that they were breaking up their homes and going forth into a strange land. Even though they had been oppressed by the Egyptians, they reasoned that if they went out into the wilderness with no Egyptian taskmasters, this would mean that they would have no food. Thus they were stiff-necked—like an ox—difficult to turn about.

The Lord's promise to Moses was, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." And he promised to be with the Israelites. He gave them assurance that they might recognize his power in their midst; for God's energy in all the affairs of earth, as of the universe, is not merely a power to know the things that are happening, but to control all events that they may outwork his designs. He guides and assists the efforts of his people. Additionally, the angels of the Lord quite probably were employed in this special work of superintending the affairs of the Israelites.

This thought is in harmony with the Scripture which inti-

This one is walking in the way to justification, but has not gotten it. He is getting nearer and nearer to the right place in his ideas, etc. Finally he comes to the place where he says, Lord, if thou wilt accept me, I will give thee all I have. He offers himself to be God's servant.

One is not yet a servant of the Lord when he turns from sin. We never had a right to do wrong; and in getting away from sin and wrong, we were not serving God. God has no servants in this age except those begotten of the holy Spirit. Others may in some sense be used as servants; for God can use even the wrath of man to serve him. In a certain sense the devil may be his servant; for sometimes he does what the Lord wishes to be done. We think the devil was serving God when he got the Jews stirred up to crucify Jesus. Demons often serve the Lord in bringing tribulation upon his people, for these tribulations are like the turning of the grindstone, that polishes the jewel. God wishes to use some means at the present time to polish his jewel class.

But the servants referred to in the parables are the Lord's consecrated people; for it is only those who have reached the point of full consecration to God that he calls his servants. Those who gave up the service of sin and unrighteousness, became their own servants, the servants of self, until they gave up their lives to the Lord. They then said, I have no will but thine. I will serve thee faithfully, even unto death. As the Lord accepts these as his servants, he gives each one a pound.

What is this pound? It is justification to life—a valuable thing. Now, being justified by faith, and being thus accepted as a servant of God, and begotten of the holy Spirit, each one has the opportunity to do what he is able as a servant of the Lord. He uses whatever talents the Lord gives him. He must do his best with all that is entrusted to his care, as a faithful steward of the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

mates that there is a guardian angel for each one of the Lord's saints, who has supervision over him. We read, "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 18:10) They have immediate communication with the Father; and thus he has direct oversight of all who belong to him.

The divine power was manifested directly with the Israelites in the Shekinah glory over the mercy seat in the most holy, which indicated the Lord's presence with them. And when they were to journey onward, the pillar of cloud went before them by day, and the pillar of fire by night. When they were to stop, this cloud would stand still. While they were encamped, the cloud would rest over the tabernacle, and the shekinah glory rested between the cherubim on the mercy-seat in the tabernacle. Thus the presence of God went with them to the land of Canaan, and gave them all things which he had promised.—Joshua 23:14.

MOSES' NEED OF ENCOURAGEMENT

From our context we perceive that Moses' meekness was again manifesting itself. He had previously asked for some one to be mouthpiece for him, and the Lord had said that Aaron might be his mouthpiece. Rash people often get into trouble, because there is a lack of meekness, modesty. But it was not so with Moses—"the meekest man in all the earth." Humility is a most important element of character. The meek man will find it easier to be gentle and patient than will the man who lacks meekness. And so in enumerating the fruits of the holy Spirit St. Paul mentions meekness.—Gal. 5:23.

When the Lord promised that his presence should go with Moses, he was speaking to him as the mediator. Therefore he said, "My presence shall go with thee." As soon as Moses had inaugurated the Law Covenant at Sinai, Israel was in covenant relationship with God, and the Lord with Israel.

ISRAEL'S FAILURE TO ENTER REST

One might get the thought that God's promise to give rest would signify that Moses should have a rest of mind, and that all who would come into line with Moses and with God's promises would also have a rest of mind. But this mental rest is not what is here meant. The Israelites were going from the land of Egypt into the land of Promise, which was to be an everlasting inheritance to them, if they would keep their Covenant. But of all the adults who came out of Egypt, only Caleb and Joshua entered into Canaan. (Num. 32:11, 12) The majority failed to enter in because of their lack of faith. The forty years' wandering in the desert was because of their fearfulness and consequent rebellion.

When on the wilderness journey Israel came finally to the place where they could see the land of Canaan, spies were sent to make investigation and to report as to which would be the best way to enter the promised land. All of the spies save Caleb and Joshua, gave an unfavorable report. Then through timidity the people said, "We cannot go up and take that land. Those people are giants, and we look like grasshoppers beside them." So in their lack of faith they murmured against going up. Therefore God swore in his wrath, "This people shall not enter into my rest."—Hebrews 3:11.

TYPICAL AND ANTITYPICAL REST

The Apostle Paul shows that the rest in Canaan was a type of the rest of the people of God, in this Gospel age. (Heb. 4:3, 9) By faith we rest in God—We rest in his promises. We are not moved away by any of the adverse conditions of the present time. Our rest is the reality; the rest of Israel was the type.

The antitypical rest, into which the Lord's people enter, has two phases. We who believe enter into rest now. We have the peace of God ruling in our hearts and guiding our lives. We have the peace of faith, the rest of faith, the confidence that God will direct our course. Therefore we are contented, even though not yet satisfied. We shall not be satisfied until we enter into our complete rest. Our true rest will be that glorious, perfect condition beyond the veil, which we shall attain through the first resurrection.

St. Paul, in discussing this question in the 3d and 4th chapters of Hebrews, declares that the people of Israel failed to enter into rest, not because God did not perform his part, but because they failed to exercise the proper faith in the Lord; they had "an evil heart of unbelief." And he proceeds to say, "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Heb. 4:1) There are requirements; there are conditions. The Apostle means that whoever would be of this overcoming class must take heed, or he will fail to enter into the eternal rest of God. There will be such a class of overcomers; and God has predestined and foreordained that they shall enter into this glorious and perfect rest. If we are faithful unto death, we shall attain this glorious rest by the resurrection "change."

JOSHUA A TYPE OF CHRIST

The world is not now able to enter into rest. They are like the raging sea. They have not come into relationship with God. As the Scriptures tell us, mankind is a poor, groaning creation, travailing together in pain. They do not see the rest which God has provided. We see, however, that when the antitypical Moses, the great Mediator, shall have been completed, he will lead the people into rest.—Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22.

ST. PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO ELDERS

"Take heed to yourselves, . . . for grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."—Acts 20:29, 30.

These words were addressed to the elders of the church at Ephesus. St. Paul, going toward Jerusalem, had found himself not far from Ephesus, and had sent word to the elders that he would remain there a little while, and would be glad to meet them once more. They came and held a lengthy conference with him. This text is part of his message to them. He told them that he would not see them again, and exhorted them to take heed to themselves. It behooves every one to take heed to himself more than to others. And unless a man learns to rule his own spirit, he could not be in a proper condition to rule others.

This is particularly true of all elders. They should watch themselves. Because of the honor which the church gives them, they are in danger of being carried away by a feeling of self-importance—self-conceit. They are in danger of becoming arrogant. But the message is to take heed to themselves, and to the flock of God, over whom they are made overseers. They are to recognize their position as representatives, not only of the congregation, but also of the Lord. This position being given them in the appointed way—an election by the stretching forth of the hand—they are not only to take this as the word of the church, but also to realize that they are chosen of the holy Spirit. They are to recognize this care of the church as their great mission, an important service to be rendered in the name of the Lord.

WOLVES AND APOSTATE SHEEP

There are two particular reasons why elders need to be on guard. The first reason, as given by the Apostle, was that grievous wolves would enter in among them, who would not spare the flock. The intimation seems to be that the wolves

Moses did not lead the people into the land of Promise; it was Joshua—their new leader—who led them over Jordan. Thus the type shows that mankind will enter into the promised land, not by the law, but by a Savior. The name Joshua means savior—Greek *Jesous*. (Heb. 4:8, margin) So Jesus will lead all of mankind who will, into the true land of Promise—into love and loyalty to God and to the principles of righteousness. It will take the entire thousand years of the Messianic kingdom to bring the world into condition for all the blessings which God has in store for them.

Our Lord Jesus entered into rest by trusting the heavenly Father to fulfil all his gracious promises. Jesus, the Head of the antitypical Moses, thus enjoyed perfect rest of heart, and realized the heavenly Father's continual presence with him. This continued for three and a half years; and then he entered into the rest complete, by the first resurrection.

The same is true of all the members of the body of the antitypical Moses—the Christ. God's presence goes with them. The world at present is not in a condition to enter into the Father's rest. Only the members of the body of Christ have entered into this rest of faith, trusting in the Lord. And none except those who continue faithful will be recognized as members of the great antitypical Mediator. All who lack faith lack proof that they are in the body of Christ. If, then, our hearts are disturbed and we cannot enter into this rest of faith, the proper course is to seek the throne of grace, that we may overcome the difficulty.

THE REST PROVIDED FOR MANKIND

As for those Israelites who the Lord said should not enter into his rest, we understand him to mean, not that no Jew will enter into the true rest of God, but rather, that this was a prophecy of the end of the Jewish age—that they as a nation would not be ready to enter into this rest of faith which was then offered them—that as a nation they would fail. They did fail; for "they knew not the day of their visitation."

As soon as the great Messiah shall establish the New Covenant, both Jews and Gentiles will enter into peace and prosperity, as rapidly as they enter into that New Covenant. But the disobedient, after a full, fair trial, will go into the second death. Throughout the Millennial age mankind will be entering into the actual rest, which will mean deliverance from the bondage of sin and death. Before Messiah's reign shall have ended, they will have fully entered into that rest and into perfection of life, and will be counted in as a part of the seed of Abraham, according to the promise, "I have constituted thee a father of many nations." (Gen. 17:5; Rom. 4:17) The blessing of the Lord will be upon them all. Any refusing to enter into the rest of God will be cut off—the wilful sinner shall die at one hundred years of age.—Isa. 65:20.

are not part of the flock at any time. They would not represent themselves as wolves, however. The Apostle's warning would seem to imply that a certain class of people of a wolfish nature would seek to associate themselves with the church. Our Lord warned, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." (Matt. 7:15) This seems to imply the thought of deception—walking like sheep, going about amongst the sheep and representing themselves to be sheep, wearing sheep's clothing, but never being real sheep. Their object in coming into the flock is selfish, their influence is that of a wolf amongst sheep. A wolf worries the sheep—his intention is to kill them, to suck their blood.

So there seems to be a class who, for no reason that we can imagine, pervert the truth, injuring the flock, stirring up arguments that confuse the flock, destroying them as new creatures, and dragging them down to death. Presumably there has been such a class all the way down through the age. While our text does not imply that sheep could ever become wolves, perhaps some of us have known persons who at one time were sheep, but who after a while manifested a wolfish disposition, and took pleasure in doing all that they could to injure the flock. The Lord and the Apostle warn us that we should beware of those who come in amongst the sheep, palming themselves off as sheep.

In addition to this danger from wolves, there will be dangers among themselves. The Apostle points this out as a very subtle danger. In addition to those of the wolfish nature, some in a class will engage in service as teachers, and by speaking perverse things will seek to draw away disciples unto themselves.

They seek to draw them away as their own. Their sentiment seems to be, This is my class, my flock—not recognizing that the church is the Lord's flock, that they are the Lord's sheep. In this there is a selfish attitude quite contrary to the spirit of the Lord and to the Scriptures. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" is a principle of the divine government. If any one would be a true elder, a real servant of the Lord, he is to remember these things, and to avoid everything that would be of a self-seeking spirit. Otherwise, he may be sure that he will do injury, not only to himself, but to others also, by such a course.

RESPONSIBILITY PROPORTIONATE TO ABILITY

Sheep are very timid animals and need some kind of leading. In the absence of a shepherd, they need some one of their own number to be, as it were, leader for them. In flocks of sheep there are wise sheep—rams of the flock, leaders—that the sheep learn to follow, in the absence of the shepherd. These old rams of the flock would represent elders in the church of Christ. The ram's horns constitute a means of defense, with which he could drive off adversaries in a time of attack, and the sheep would be able to get behind him.

But the Scriptures speak of danger as respects some of the rams of the flock—certain leaders of the Lord's people. (Ezek. 34:17-23) These rams got into the stream and made it muddy, defiling the water. He-goats are also mentioned; this is an illustration of the disposition of some elders of the church of Christ, and should not be lost upon us. We are told that owners of sheep sometimes use a goat as a leader of the flock, because a goat is more combative than a sheep, and thus supply the sheep courage, etc. We do not know how many of the Lord's flock are being led by a goat. But whenever any one manifests the goat disposition, the Ecclesia should strictly avoid making him a leader.

The proper leaders are those who show the proper disposition. The church is very much at the mercy of the leaders; hence the latter have the greater responsibility. So the Apostle says, Be not many of you teachers, my brethren, knowing that a man who is a teacher has the severer test. (Paraphrase of James 3:1, R. V.) He has the greater responsibility in proportion to his ability. It would seem, then, that all who accept the position of elders are, to some extent, representing the Lord, who is the great Shepherd of the flock.

"WOE UNTO YOU, PHARISEES!"

FEBRUARY 15.—Luke 11:37-54.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked."—Galatians 6:7.

Amongst the various sects of the Jews of our Lord's day we have every reason to believe that the Pharisees constituted the best—the one most loyal to God and his law. The Sadducees professed no faith in a future life. They were infidels and politicians. The Essenes were a small sect not mentioned in the Bible, a kind of higher critics, of little faith and confused by mixing paganism with Judaism. The Pharisees were what might be termed the orthodox body of Jews. Their name signifies "holy people." In today's study, Jesus, not deigning to mention the other sects, which had entirely departed from God, addresses himself especially to the Pharisees, pointing out wherein, with all their boasted holiness, they came far short of what would be acceptable to God.

A Pharisee invited Jesus to dine with him at his house. The invitation was promptly accepted, and Jesus passed in and sat down at the table with the others, without going through the formalism of washings, customary to the Pharisees. We are not from this to suppose that Jesus was careless. Rather, we are to recognize that the washing of hands by the Pharisees was a ceremony which Jesus especially wished to ignore, in order that he might have the opportunity of criticising that spirit which the ceremony well illustrated.

The host thought of Jesus as a holy man, not a publican or a sinner, and remarked that it was strange that he had not performed the usual ceremony of washing. This remark gave opportunity for a discourse on the subject. Jesus pointed out that a great deal of the religion which even the holiest of the Jews practised was merely ceremony, formalism, and not true religion. Outwardly they were clean, but inwardly their hearts were unclean—given to extortion—spiritual wickedness. The Lord sought to show that in God's sight the heart is the important matter and that the outward cleansing is quite secondary. The inside of the cup should first be attended to, and afterward the outside.

As a matter of fact, those who do come into heart harmony with the Lord, and who are cleansed by obedience to his message and its spirit, are thereby made clean every whit—outwardly, as well as inwardly. It is safe to say that every one who is pure in heart will, according to his circumstances and opportunities, seek to be clean in person, in speech, in every way. The principle working in his heart will exercise an influence upon all his words and thoughts and doings—all his days and all his hours.

From the expressions of our Lord here and elsewhere it would appear that one of the great failings of the Pharisees was covetousness. According to the Greek, Jesus called them "money-lovers." On one occasion he told them that this covetousness, greed, love of money, led them to disregard dishonestly the rights of others. He said: Ye devour widows' houses, meaning that they would take advantage of widows to accumulate property for themselves. As a matter of fact, it would appear that many of the Pharisees were quite rich.

Jesus pointed out that with such wrong conditions of heart God could not be well pleased with them, even though they ever so carefully observed the outward regulations of the Jewish law. He called attention to the fact that in their outward observance of the tithing (giving one-tenth of their income every year) they were particular even to those small

seeds of which they grew but a trifling quantity. In everything they were careful to give one-tenth, but they neglected the weightier matters of the law—to do justice in their dealings and to have mercy toward others. The Master did not object to their giving one-tenth of everything, but declared that these things they should do and not to leave the more important things undone.

Another time he reproved them, saying, Ye strain a gnat and swallow a camel—a strong hyperbole, a figure of speech, showing how inconsistent were their reasonings and doings. The straining out of a gnat represented their carefulness to avoid things strangled. The swallowing of a camel meant that, on the contrary, while careful about the little things, they would be thoroughly disregardful of God's law on the weightier matters. Jesus declared that they should be benevolent rather than covetous and self-seeking, and that if this were their disposition of heart the outward cleanliness would be less important.

He declared that they chose the chief seats in the synagogue and salutations in the market-places. Their covetousness took the form of pride, as well as dishonesty. They wanted to be very prominent in things religious, to be very popular and to be hailed as "Rabbi"—master, learned one. Jesus declared that they were like sepulchres, outwardly clean and whitewashed, but inwardly full of death, corruption, uncleanness, unholiness. They were holiness people merely in the outward form or ceremonial.

It is not for us to judge all or any of the sects of Christendom and to apply the Master's words to them. Unlike Jesus, we have not the power to read men's hearts, nor the authority to pronounce them hypocrites. The Lord's message to us is, "Judge [condemn] nothing before the time." At his second coming, he declares, everything will be revealed. The true status of each will be shown. He declares that at that time many will be saying, Lord, have we not done many mighty works in thy name? but that he will, nevertheless, declare to them: I do not recognize you. Ye have been workers of iniquity—workers of unrighteousness—in my name.

Without judging personally, we may all fear that much of the Christianity of our time is well described by the Apostle Paul. Speaking of our day he says, "Having a form of godliness, but denying its power"—outwardly Christians, but inwardly skeptics—covetous, extortionate, unjust. Men are not able to judge rightly of such matters today. Some who are loyal and zealous for the Lord are branded as hypocrites and deceivers; while others, disloyal, merely whitened sepulchres, may be lauded to the skies as denominational idols or generous benefactors of earthly systems.

Some of the Pharisees, especially educated, talented and well-versed in the teachings of the law and the prophets, were styled lawyers—Doctors of the Law, the equivalent of what today are termed Doctors of Divinity. Turning to these, Jesus upbraided them, saying that they placed upon the common people grievous burdens which they themselves would not bear. He meant that they gave such hard interpretations of God's law as were discouraging to the common people—setting before the publicans and sinners standards of excellence and perfection which they themselves would not think of even trying to live up

to. Apparently the thought was thereby to impress the common people with the sanctity of the clergy, that they might be the more reverential toward them. They builded sepulchres for the prophets of old, forgetful that their fathers, whose same spirit they had, were the very ones who had killed those prophets—had persecuted them to death.

WOE! WOE! WOE! WOE! WOE!

While Jesus prophesied woes against the Pharisees, we are not to think of him as condemning them to eternal torment, nor as intimating that this would be the nature of the woe that would come upon them. The woe to the Pharisees was that they were about to miss the great blessing which God had promised to the Jewish nation; namely, that of chief association in Messiah's kingdom. (Genesis 12:3) The promise belonged to Israel primarily. Because of their unpreparedness for it, this was taken from them to be given to another Israel. Had enough of them been "Israelites indeed" to complete God's foreordained elect, the bride of Christ, the kingdom offer would not have gone to the Gentiles.

The Pharisees, of all the Jews, were in the most favored place for attaining to joint-heirship with Messiah; but they recognized not what they were losing, as Jesus recognized it. His expression, "Woe unto you," is therefore to be regarded sympathetically, pityingly. This thought is borne out in the

context, which proceeds to declare the great time of trouble which came upon their nation at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, and reached its completion in A. D. 70 in the total destruction of their city and polity.

As the Lord here declares, that awful trouble was a settlement of Jehovah's account with the Jewish nation for all the righteous blood which had been shed and for which no expiation had been made. Little did those Pharisees know that their hypocrisy was not only hindering themselves from preparation to be joint-heirs with Messiah in his kingdom, but was also hindering the masses of the people, who relied upon them for information. Jesus refers to this in the succeeding verse (52), saying, Ye have taken away the key of knowledge. Ye neither enter into the kingdom yourselves, nor do you permit others to enter who would be glad to do so, but who are misled by relying upon your judgment.

Bible students very generally believe that the great time of trouble which closed the Jewish age was an advanced picture, or prophecy, of the still wider spread of the time of trouble which will close this Gospel age and bring woe to many of the Pharisees of our day, as well as tribulation upon all evil-doers in connection with the overthrow of present institutions, as a prelude to the establishment of justice—the Messianic reign of glory.

GOOD CONFESSION VERSUS BAD CONFESSION

FEBRUARY 22.—Luke 12:1-12.

"Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God."—V. 8.

A large crowd surrounded the Savior, anxious to hear him who "spake as never man spake." Ignoring the multitude, Jesus addressed his disciples, saying: "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Here, as elsewhere in his teachings, Jesus uses leaven as a symbol, or figure, of an evil influence. We know not of one instance in which leaven is used to represent anything good or pure. During the Passover season Jews were prohibited from using it, thus symbolizing the putting away of sin.

Jesus declared that the hypocrisies practised by the Pharisees—the learned people of that time—were leaven, impurity, sin, contaminating in their influence. His disciples should be honest, sincere, pure, free from cant and deception. Their words and works should be such as would not need to be covered. Jesus declared that ultimately all hypocrisies and sins will be uncovered, revealed. Undoubtedly he meant that during his kingdom, when the power of the resurrection will be exercised, all the hidden things of darkness will be abolished, the secrets of mankind will be exposed. No doubt this will constitute the basis of the shame and contempt which will be the punishment of many, as foretold.

Thus we read that in the resurrection some will come forth to shine as the stars of heaven, and others to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:2) However, it is comforting to know that the Hebrew text signifies lasting and not everlasting. The shame and contempt will last as long as the shameful and contemptible conditions last—until the reformation of the individual or, that failing, until his destruction in the second death.

FEAR NOT PERSECUTIONS

Jesus intimated that honesty of life would bring his followers persecution from the hypocrites; but that they should not fear, even though the persecution resulted in their death. The present life is but ephemeral, at best. The life that is worth considering is the everlasting one which God has provided for all the willing and obedient, and which may eventually be attained through the merit of Jesus' sacrifice. Those who thus believe should have no fear of what man can do to them, but rather should be fearful of anything that would separate them from God and his gracious provisions of a future life.

"Fear him who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell." The word hell here is Gehenna in the Greek. Primarily, this is the name of the valley outside of Jerusalem, into which the offal of the city was cast for utter destruction, and into which the vilest criminals were cast after execution—not to torment them, but to imply symbolically that there was no future for the wicked. Jesus used Gehenna as a type of the second death, which will be the portion of all who wilfully, intelligently, deliberately, sin against light and knowledge.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and a reverential fear is always proper. But as God's people become intimately acquainted with him, learning of his justice, wisdom, love and power, and realize that he is the friend of all who love righteousness, they come to love God; and, as the Apostle declares, "Perfect love casteth out fear [dread to

offend]," which signifies rest. The Lord's disciples were to realize their heavenly Father's care for them and his wisdom—that as he forgets not the sparrows, so he will not forget them; and that not even a hair of their heads could be injured without his knowledge and permission; that everything that he permits to come to his people, to his children, he assures them, will work out for them some blessing.

CONFESS ME BEFORE MEN

Whoever would be in accord with God must confess him and must confess Jesus, his representative, whom he sent into the world. Whoever confesses Jesus, confesses the Father who sent him. And all such will be in the Lord's favor, and ultimately be acknowledged in the resurrection by the Father and the holy angels, as members of the bride of Christ. But those who, after becoming disciples of Christ, deny him, he will not acknowledge as disciples in glory.

Jesus' words were addressed to the disciples, not to the masses. Whoever would confess Christ would become his disciple. None could deny him who had never acknowledged him. He is to be confessed, not merely by baptism, nor by any outward form. He is to be confessed in the life, in the conduct, in the words, of his followers. They are to have his spirit and to "show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light." Whoever makes a profession of being a disciple, and then ignores the Master's teachings, misrepresents him, slanders him, denies him, and will not share in the glorious presentation of the bride, in the end of this age.

The masses, of course, were in doubt, and did not become disciples at all. Some even derided Jesus, saying that he had a devil and was mad. The Master declared that such misunderstanding of him and such slanders were quite forgivable, if done ignorantly. But when some went beyond this, and declared that his good works of the holy Spirit were accomplished through the power of Satan, Beelzebub, they were committing inexcusable sins which would not be passed over.

Such sin must be wilful; for their accusations had no basis whatever. The Master's teachings were purity itself. His conduct, his sayings and his miracles were all good works. Only a wilful perversity could attribute these to Satan. The fact that they would never be forgiven does not signify, however, that the vilifiers were hopelessly lost. They would suffer punishment proportionate to the degree of their wilfulness. If the punishment would bring reformation, well and good; but if not, it would eventuate in utter destruction—the second death.

Few subjects are less understood than this one—the sin against the holy Spirit. The word spirit in such a case as this stands for power, or influence. For instance, the spirit of Satan would be the power, or influence, adverse to God and to righteousness. The spirit of error would be the power, or influence, of falsehood. Contrariwise, the spirit of truth, the spirit of God, the holy Spirit, represents divine influence and power, wherever recognized. The responsibility of each individual is proportionate to his enlightenment. The mentally and morally blind have comparatively little responsibility, because they do not appreciate clearly the distinction between the spirit