

JESUS NO LONGER FLESH—NOW "THAT SPIRIT"

"With what body do they come?"—1 Cor. 15:35.

In the May 1 issue of *THE WATCH TOWER* we discussed the fact of the resurrection and showed from St. Paul's words that without God's purpose of a resurrection those who have fallen asleep in death would have perished as brutes. We followed with the Apostle the assurances that Christ did rise from the dead and did become the First-fruits of all those who have gone into the sleep of death. Others, indeed, were awakened temporarily—as, for instance, Jairus' daughter, Lazarus the friend of Jesus, and the son of the widow of Nain.

Yet none of those instances is counted as a resurrection, for it is said that Christ is the first-fruits of those who slept. Their awakening was merely of a temporary nature, and they soon relapsed into the sleep of death. They did not have a full resurrection—*anastasis*—a raising up to perfection of life, such as the redemptive work of Jesus guarantees to Adam and to all his race willing to accept the same under the terms of the New Covenant.

You will recall that in our last issue we demonstrated from the Scriptures that it is not the body, but the soul, that is promised a resurrection—that it was our Lord's soul that went to sheol, hades, to the death state, and that God raised him up from death on the third day. We noted a difficulty into which all Christendom was plunged by the unscriptural theory that it is the body that is to be resurrected. We now continue to search and note well further difficulties into which this error plunged us as believers in the words of Christ, particularly in connection with our Redeemer's resurrection.

The ordinary thought in Christian minds in respect to Jesus' death and resurrection is that when he seemed to die he did not die; that he, the being, the soul, could not die; that, instead, he went to heaven, and then, on the third day, came back to get the body which had been crucified; and that he took it to heaven forty days later; that he has had that body ever since; and that he will have it to all eternity, marred with the print of the nails in his hands and feet, the thorns upon his brow, and the spear mark in his side. What a ghastly thought! How strange that we should ever have been misled into so unscriptural and unreasonable a theory! Some endeavor to gloss the matter by suggesting that our Lord's flesh is glorified—that it shines—the shining presumably making the wounds all the more conspicuous.

ABSURDITY OF THEORIES RECEIVED FROM DARK AGES

Our Methodist friends have not yet changed their statement of the matter, namely, "He ascended up on high, taking his fleshly body with him, and all that appertained thereto, and sat down on the right hand of God." This medieval statement correctly admits that the fleshly body was not the Lord's, but that he, the soul, took it with him as luggage. The statement, "and all that appertained thereto," presumably would refer to our Lord's sandals, walking stick and such clothing as the soldiers did not divide amongst them at the time of his crucifixion—if indeed he had any others! But our dear Methodist friends want to be sure that nothing was left behind.

All this is of a piece with the theory that the saints when they die go to heaven, and then, later, come back and get their bodies, "and all things appertaining thereto"—the inconveniences that they have been rid of for centuries! How many trunkloads of "things appertaining thereto" may be taken by some, and how mixed an assortment by others is not stated. Neither are particulars given respecting those whose clothing, etc., have meantime worn out. But we have had enough of this, if it has helped us to see the absurdity of our theories received from the "dark ages"—if it has awakened us to thought and to Bible investigation on this important and interesting subject.

WHAT SAY THE SCRIPTURES?

The Bible presentation of this subject is every way reasonable, consistent and harmonious. St. Paul points out that "there is a natural body and there is a spirit body." He does not mean and he does not say that the spirit body is a human body glorified. Quite to the contrary. He declares that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"—no matter how glorified it might be. A human being is so totally different from a spirit being that, as St. Paul says, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," in our resurrection change; and the Scriptures do not even attempt to give us an explanation.

The Bible merely declares that as we now bear the image of the earthy, Adam, we shall, by the glorious resurrection change, be given a share in the nature and likeness of the second Adam, our glorious Lord. We shall be like him and

see him as he is; and, be it noted, we must change from flesh and blood conditions to spirit conditions by resurrection power, in order that we may see him as he is. Surely this proves that our Lord Jesus is no longer flesh, as he once was—"in the days of his flesh."—Hebrews 5:7.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEAVENLY AND EARTHLY BODIES

Our text calls attention to the difference between celestial bodies and terrestrial, or earthly bodies, and declares that they have different glories. It tells us that the first Adam was made a living soul, a human being, but that our Redeemer, who humbled himself and took the earthly nature, "for the suffering of death," thereby became the second Adam—the Heavenly Lord. The wide distinction between the second Adam and the first Adam is clearly set forth. One was earthy and the other heavenly. As we now bear the image of the earthy, we shall, if faithful, bear the heavenly image of our Lord, the second Adam, after our resurrection change.

St. Paul illustrates by saying that we know by many kinds of organisms on the earthy or fleshly plane—one flesh of man, another of beasts, another of birds and another of fish. But however different the organisms they are all earthy. So, on the heavenly plane, the spirit plane, there are varieties of organisms, but all are spirit.

Our heavenly Father is the Head or Chief—"God is a Spirit." Cherubim, seraphim, and the still lower order of angels are all spirit beings; and Christ Jesus, our Redeemer, after finishing the work of sacrificing appointed to him, was resurrected to the spirit plane—far above angels, principalities and powers—next to the Father; and thus we read, "Now the Lord is that Spirit." And again that "He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened (or made alive) in the spirit."—1 Pet. 3:18.

The more we examine the subject the more foolish and unscriptural the views handed to us from the dark ages appear. For instance, the Scriptures clearly set forth that our Redeemer, prior to becoming a man, was a spirit being—"the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." His leaving the spirit plane to become a man is Scripturally described as a great stoop or humiliation. Is it reasonable to suppose that the heavenly Father would perpetuate to all eternity that humiliation, after it had served its intended purpose? Surely he would do nothing of the kind!

The Bible tells us why Jesus humbled himself to the human nature—"a little lower than the angels." It was because a man had sinned, and the Redeemer must, under the law, be on the same plane of being as the one whom he would redeem. Thus Jehovah particularly specified, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life." Hence the death of an angel, or of our Lord in his pre-human condition, could not have effected the payment of man's penalty and the consequent release of the condemned race. Thus again we read, "A body hast thou prepared me," "for the suffering of death."

GOD HIGHLY EXALTED HIM

No one questions that this applies exclusively to our Lord's experiences during the years in which "He who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." Surely it is unsupposable that the Father would arrange a plan by which our Redeemer's faithfulness in accomplishing man's redemption would cost him an eternity of poverty, humiliation, degradation to a plane "a little lower than the angels," while the church would be made rich, and would attain a spirit state "far above angels"—be made "partakers of the divine nature."—2 Peter 1:4.

On the contrary, the very same Apostle who tells us of our Lord's humiliation carries the matter to the climax, telling us of his faithfulness, as the Man Christ Jesus, unto death, even the death of the cross; and then he adds an assurance of the heavenly Father's faithfulness in not leaving his Son on a lower plane: "Wherefore," says the Apostle, "God also highly exalted him, and hath given him a name above every name." This, too, is in harmony with our Lord's words in his prayer to the Father. A joy had been set before him by the Father—a joy of pleasing the Father, of bringing a blessing to mankind, and the joy also of exaltation, as a special reward for obedience.

But the Redeemer, ignoring all the promises of a higher glory as a reward for his faithfulness, merely prayed to the Father in these words, "Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." In humility he asked no reward. He did not pray, Remember that you

promised a still greater exaltation in glory! No, he would be quite content to have served the Father's purpose and plans and then to return to the glorious state in which he was before he left the glory, and for our sakes became poor and took upon himself the human nature. And what said the heavenly Father in response to that prayer? Oh, we remember the words of Jehovah were, "I have glorified thee, and I will glorify thee again," or further—the implication is that of a still higher glory than the one which he enjoyed before he was made flesh.

HE APPEARED AND DISAPPEARED

Two lines of difficulties present themselves, one of which can be answered and the other cannot. The unanswerable difficulty is where a natural-minded man undertakes to reason the subject out. He finds it impossible of comprehension as he finds other items of divine revelation. St. Paul explains this, saying, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The Apostle proceeds to tell us that all men are natural men, except such as have been begotten by the holy Spirit. All natural men will, in their resurrection, receive earthly, or human bodies, while all spiritual ones, new creatures in Christ, will receive spirit bodies, as St. Paul explains in our context, verses 36-50.

Those of our readers, therefore, who have never accepted Christ, and made a full consecration of their all to be his disciples, following in his footsteps, may know that they have not been begotten of the holy Spirit (because only upon these terms are any begotten of the spirit). These, therefore, we will ask to consider what we say, and hold it, if they please, tentatively, until such time as, in God's providence, they may be begotten of the holy Spirit, and thus be enabled to understand spiritual matters such as this.

Another class who have difficulty on this subject are the spirit-begotten ones who have been entangled in their reasoning by the declaration of the creeds respecting the resurrection of the body. It is difficult to unlearn error. When visiting various lands and learning of the hold of superstition upon the heathens, we said to ourselves, We believe that we Christians experience just as much difficulty in unlearning our errors as these heathens do in getting free from theirs.

THE UNCONSECRATED CANNOT UNDERSTAND SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS

Coming to the point of what is to be resurrected, we note the fact that our Lord appeared in a body of flesh, and showed the disciples the print of the nails and the hole made by the spear. But we, perhaps, failed to note that only twice did he thus appear, and but for a few moments each time. His other six or seven appearances during those forty days were also very brief, and in various bodies—once as a gardener, another time as a traveler—his third time as a stranger on the shore, and to Saul of Tarsus, as a spirit being of more than angelic brightness, "shining above the brightness of the sun at noon-day." We overlooked the fact that these appearances, if all put together, would probably not have exceeded four hours out of the entire forty days in which our Lord tarried with his disciples after his resurrection and before his ascension.

We were not critical students when we overlooked these things, and forgot to ask ourselves why these things were so.

Now we see more distinctly why our Lord did as he did. His disciples were natural men and therefore could not appreciate spiritual things. Furthermore, they could not receive the guiding of the holy Spirit until the Lord's ascension and appearance in the presence of the Father on behalf of his church, to make satisfaction for their sins, and to make them acceptable joint-sacrificers with him. Meantime, had Jesus not tarried those forty days—had he ascended immediately after his resurrection—the disciples, stunned and bewildered, would have had no assurance of his resurrection. They would have found it impossible to go out and tell the people that he had risen from the dead when they had no proof to this effect.

And even if Jesus had appeared to them as he did to Saul of Tarsus, above the bright shining of the sun, this would not have been convincing and satisfactory. They might have said, Here is a phenomenon, but how can we positively associate it with the life and death of Jesus? Matters were different with Saul of Tarsus. He needed something to thoroughly arouse him and to teach him for all time, and others through him, that the Lord is not a man, but "that Spirit." Besides, some of the disciples who already believed were able to give Saul of Tarsus assurances of what they knew respecting the resurrection of Jesus and his ascension.

NO FOOLISH SUGGESTIONS IN BIBLE ABOUT THE RESURRECTION

The Lord adopted the only reasonable way of helping his disciples to understand that he was no longer dead—that he had risen from the dead—and that he was no longer human, but had been glorified, and had become a spirit being. The two things were necessary and they were done at the same time.

Even on the occasion when our Lord appeared in a body like to the one crucified, he took care that the manifestation should be under such conditions as would positively prove that he had become a spirit being. He came into the room where they were while the door was shut, and after a few words with them he vanished from their sight, as no human being could have done and as he never did during his earthly career. That the Apostles caught the thought is well evidenced by St. Paul's argument on the subject in the context. There is no foolish suggestion in the Bible about Jesus having a fleshly body in heaven—that is all in our creeds and hymn books, prepared for us by our well-meaning but mistaken forefathers, who used to burn one another at the stake if they failed to promptly agree together on such propositions.

We mourn the dead, but they shall wake;
The lost, but they shall be restored!
Oh, well our human hearts might break
Without that sacred word!
Dim eyes, look up! sad hearts, rejoice!
Seeing God's bow of promise through,
At sound of that prophetic voice:
"I will make all things new."

THE SABBATH DAY

Seven is a very prominent number in the Bible—in everything relating to the divine program. In the first chapter of Genesis the Sabbath day is referred to in a figurative way in speaking of the seventh epoch of God's creations on our earth—bringing order out of chaos. Not until Mt. Sinai, however, when the law was given to Israel on two tables of stone, was the day Sabbath made obligatory on anybody. And since that Law Covenant was made with the one nation (Israel) and none other, the Sabbath requirements of that law apply to that nation only. This does not signify that the setting apart of a certain time for rest would be of advantage only to the Jew, nor that a special seventh day devoted to God would be disadvantageous to all people. It merely means that God entered into covenant relationship with the one nation only, and hence to them only he told his will, his law—obedience to which he made the foundation of the blessing he promised to that people. There is no room to question the import of the Fourth Commandment of the Jewish law. It distinctly commanded that the seventh day of the week should be to the Jews a rest day, in which no work of any kind should be done, either by parent or child, employer and servant, male or female, ox or ass or any creature owned by a Jew. It was a rest day pure and simple. Divine worship was not commanded to be done on that day—not because God would be displeased to have divine worship upon that day or upon any day, but because there is a

reason connected with the matter which related, not to worship, but to rest, as we shall see. The strictness of this law upon the Jews is fully attested by the fact that upon one occasion, by divine command, a man was stoned to death for merely picking up sticks on the Sabbath day. It is plain, therefore, to be seen that the law given to Israel on this subject meant what it said to the very letter.

In the New Testament Jesus is supposed by some to have taught a laxity in the matter of Sabbath observance, but this is quite a misunderstanding. Jesus, born a Jew, "born under the law," was as much obligated to keep that Law in its very letter as was any other Jew. And he did not, of course, violate the obligation in the slightest degree. The Scribes and Pharisees had strayed away from the real spirit of the Law in many particulars. Their tradition, represented at the present time by their Talmud, attempted to explain the law, but really, as Jesus said frequently, made it void, meaningless, absurd. For instance, according to the traditions of their elders, it was breaking the Sabbath, if one were hungry, to rub the kernels of wheat in their hands and blow away the chaff and eat the grain, as the disciples did one Sabbath day in passing through the wheat field. The Pharisees called attention to this and wanted Jesus to reprove the disciples, because, according to their thought, this simple process was labor—work—reaping and thrashing and winnowing. Jesus resisted this absurd mis-

interpretation of the law and by his arguments proved to anyone willing to be taught that they had mistaken the divine intention—had mistranslated the law of the Sabbath. On several occasions he healed the sick on the Sabbath day. Indeed, the majority of his healings were done on that day, greatly to the disgust of the Pharisees, who claimed that he was a law-breaker in so doing. We cannot suppose that Jesus performed these miracles to aggravate the Pharisees; rather we are to understand that their Sabbath day typified the great Sabbath of blessing and healing—the antitypical Sabbath which is in the future—the period of the Messianic reign and the healing of all earth's sorrows.

Jesus clearly pointed out to the scribes and Pharisees that they were misinterpreting the meaning of the divine arrangement, that God did not make man merely to keep a Sabbath, but that he had made the Sabbath for, in the interest of, mankind. Hence everything necessary for man's assistance would be lawful on the Sabbath day, however laborious it might be. Indeed, Jesus carried the thought still farther and pointed out to his hearers the absurdity of their position—for, he said, if any of you should have an ox or an ass fall into the pit on a Sabbath day, would you leave him to die and thus suffer loss, as well as allow the animal to be in pain? Assuredly they would not, and assuredly they would be justified in helping any creature out of trouble on that day. Then said Jesus, If so much might be done for a dumb creature, might not a good work of mercy and help for mankind be properly enough done on the Sabbath day?

THE SEVENTH DAY STILL A SABBATH

A mistake made by many Christians is the supposition that the Law Covenant which God made with Israel ceased, passed away. On the contrary, as the Apostle declares, "The Law hath dominion over a man so long as he liveth." The Jewish law is as obligatory upon the Jew today as it was upon his fathers in the days of Moses. Only death could set the Jew free from that Law Covenant until, in God's due time, it shall be enlarged and made what God, through the Prophet, styles a New Covenant—a New Law Covenant. That will take place just as soon as the Mediator of the New Covenant shall have been raised up from amongst the people. That Prophet will be like unto Moses, but greater—the antitype. That Prophet will be the glorified Christ—Jesus the Head and the completed church, who are frequently spoken of as members of his body, and sometimes styled the bride, the Lamb's wife. This antitypical Mediator (Acts 3:22, 23), under the New Law Covenant which he will then establish, will assist the Jews (and all who come into harmony with God through him) back to that human perfection in which they will be able to keep the divine law perfectly in every particular. This great Mediator, Messiah, will for a thousand years carry on this great work.

This Mediator is not yet completed. The Head has passed into glory centuries ago, but the body, the church, awaits a completeness of membership and resurrection change—to be made "like him and see him as he is" and share his glory and his work.

Meantime the Law Covenant is still in force upon every Jew; but it is not in force upon any but Jews, as it never has been in force upon any other people. During these eighteen centuries, between the death of Christ and the inauguration of the New Covenant, Jesus, as the great High Priest, is offering the "better sacrifices" mentioned by St. Paul (Heb. 9:23) and described in type in Leviticus 16. The first part of the great High Priest's sacrifice was the offering of the human body which he took for the purpose when he was made flesh—"a body hast thou prepared me" "for the suffering of death." (Heb. 9:5; 2:9) The second part of his "better sacrifices" is the offering of his mystical body—the church. This work has been in progress since Pentecost. To the consecrated ones who approach the Father through him he becomes the Advocate. He accepts them as his members on the earth; and their sufferings thenceforth are his sufferings so fully that he could say of them to Saul of Tarsus, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." These, accepted as his representatives in the flesh, their blemishes covered by their Advocate's merit, are begotten, by the Heavenly Father, of the holy Spirit to be members of the new creation—the spiritual body of Christ, of which he is the Head.

We remarked that the Sabbath day, still in full force and its observance obligatory upon the Jew, is not upon other nationalities. We should modify this statement by the remark that there are some who mistakenly endeavor to be Jews and try to get under the Law Covenant provisions as Sabbath-keepers, etc. St. Paul recognized this tendency in his day. Note his words to the Christians of Galatia, who were not by nature Jews but Gentiles. He says, "Ye that desire to be un-

der the law, do ye not hear the law?" "Oh, foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" He proceeds to show them that the Jews are in bondage to their law and can never get eternal life under it until the Mosaic Law Covenant shall ultimately be merged into the Messianic New Law Covenant. His argument then is that if the Jew cannot get life in keeping the law, it would be foolish for Gentiles to think that they could secure divine favor and everlasting life by keeping that law. He declares, "By the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight." The only way to obtain justification in God's sight is by the acceptance of Christ and by a full consecration to be his disciples and to join with him in his covenant of sacrifice—as it is written, "Gather together my saints unto me, saith the Lord, those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Psa. 50:5); and again, "I beseech you, brethren, present your bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, your reasonable service."—Romans 12:1.

CHRISTIANS AND THE LAW SABBATH

St. Paul did not mean that Christians should not strive to keep the divine law, but that they should not put themselves under it as a covenant, nor think that by striving to oppose the Law Covenant they would get or maintain harmony with God and gain the reward of everlasting life. On the contrary, he declares in so many words, "The righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us who are walking, not after (or according to) the flesh, but after (or according to) the spirit." (Romans 8:4) His meaning is clear. The Decalogue was never given to Christians, but it is quite appropriate that Christians should look back to that Decalogue and note the spirit of its teachings and strive to conform their lives thereto in every particular.

But what is the spirit of the Decalogue? Our Lord Jesus clearly set it forth to be—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy being, with all thy strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." St. Paul says that our Lord not only kept that law, but that he magnified it, or showed it to have greater proportions than the Jews ever supposed it had—length and breadth, height and depth beyond the ability of fallen humanity to perform; moreover, the Apostle declares that our Lord Jesus made that law honorable. The Jews having tried to keep the divine law for more than sixteen centuries had reason to doubt if anyone could keep it in a way satisfactory to God. But the fact that Jesus did keep the law perfectly, and that God was satisfied with his keeping of it, made the law honorable—proved that it was not an unreasonable requirement—not beyond the ability of a perfect man.

Jesus showed the spirit or deeper meaning of several of the commandments; for instance, the command, Thou shalt do no murder, he indicated would be violated by anyone's becoming angry and manifesting in any degree an injurious or murderous spirit. (See also 1 John 3:15) The commandment respecting adultery our Lord declares could be violated by the mind without any overt act—the simple desire to commit adultery if an opportunity offered would be a violation of the spirit of that command. It is this magnified conception of the Ten Commandments that the Apostle says Christians are better able to appreciate than were the Jews, because of having received the begetting of the holy Spirit. And it is this highest conception of the divine law which is fulfilled in us (Christians—footstep followers of Jesus) who are walking through life, not according to the flesh and its desires and promptings, but according to the spirit—the spirit of the divine law, the spirit which the Father hath sent forth into our hearts—the desire to be like him who is the fountain of love and purity.

THE SPIRIT OF THE SABBATH

And there is another or deeper meaning to the other commandments than was understood by the Jews; so it is also with the fourth, which enjoins the keeping of the Seventh day as a day of rest or Sabbath. The word Sabbath signifies rest, and its deeper or antitypical meaning to the Christian is the rest of faith. The Jew, unable to keep the Mosaic law and unable, therefore, to get everlasting life under the Law Covenant, was exhorted to flee to Christ; and, by becoming dead to the Law Covenant, by utterly renouncing it, he was privileged to come into membership in Christ—become sharer in the covenant of sacrifice. So doing, he was promised rest from the law and its condemnation, because "to them that are in Christ there is no condemnation"—the merit of Christ covers the shortcomings of all those who are striving to walk in his steps, and the divine Spirit and Word give them the assurances of divine favor, which ushers them into peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ—ushers them into rest. Thus the Apostle declares, "We which believe do enter into (Sabbath) rest."—Hebrews 4:3.

Moreover, the Apostle indicates that although we enter into

a rest of faith now, through faith and obedience to Christ, Christians have a still greater rest awaiting them beyond their resurrection, when they shall enter into the Lord—the rest, the perfection, on the spirit plane, attained, as the Apostle describes, by resurrection—“sown in weakness, raised in power; sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown an animal body, raised a spirit body.”

FIFTIETH DAY AND FIFTIETH YEAR

Here we are reminded that Israel had two systems of Sabbaths—one of Sabbath days and the other of Sabbath years. The Sabbath days began to count in the Spring. It was a multiple of seven. Seven times seven days (forty-nine days) brought them to the Jubilee day, the fiftieth day, which was styled Pentecost. It is scarcely necessary to call attention to the fulfilment of the antitype of this. Pentecost never had its true meaning until the Lord, as “the first-fruits of them that slept,” arose from the dead. Then immediately the seven times seven, plus one, began to count, and on the fiftieth day the holy Spirit was shed abroad upon all those “Israelites indeed” who, already consecrated, were waiting in the upper room for the antitypical High Priest to make satisfaction for their sins and to shed forth upon them the holy Spirit, as the evidence of their restoration to divine favor. Immediately they had peace with God. Immediately they entered into rest. Immediately they realized that they were children of God, begotten of the holy Spirit, that they might in due time become joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord. And is it not true that all down throughout this Gospel age all who follow in the footsteps of Jesus and the disciples, all who renounce sin, trust in Jesus and fully consecrate their lives to him, become recipients of the holy Spirit and similarly enter into his rest? Only those who have entered into this rest and joy of the holy Spirit can fully appreciate the matter.

Now let us glance at the year Sabbath. Every seventh year the land had its rest. And seven times seven (forty-nine) brought them up to the fiftieth year or the Year of Jubilee, in which year all debts were cancelled and each Israelite returned to his own inheritance. It was a year of rest, peace, joy. That Jubilee pictures the glorious Restitution Times of Messiah's kingdom, which, we believe, are nigh, even at the door. When these times shall be ushered in, all the faithful followers of Jesus will have reached the heavenly condition, to be forever with the Lord. Their rest (Sabbath keeping) will have reached its completion, its perfection, and throughout that antitypical Jubilee the blessings of divine favor will be gradually extended to the whole world, that every creature desirous of coming into harmony with God may enter into the rest which God has provided for the poor, groaning creation through the great Redeemer.

THE CHRISTIAN'S SUNDAY SABBATH

From what we have already seen it is manifest that God has put no Sabbath obligations upon the Christian—neither for the seventh day nor for any other day of the week. He has, however, provided for him a rest in the Lord, which is typified by the Jewish Sabbath day. Do we ask upon which day we should celebrate this rest? We answer that we should be in this heart attitude of joy, rest, peace in the Lord and in his finished work, every day. So, then, the Christian, instead of having a Sabbath rest day, as the Jew, has rest perpetual—every day. And instead of its being merely a rest for his body, it is better—a rest for his soul, a rest for his entire being. It can be enjoyed wherever he may be, “at home or abroad, on the land or the sea,” for “as his days may demand, shall his rest ever be.” This is the spiritual antitype to the spiritual Israelite, of the law Sabbath given to the natural Israelites. Whoever quibbles for the day Sabbath of the Jew shows clearly that he has not understood nor appreciated as yet, to the full at least, the antitypical Sabbath which God has provided for the spiritual Israel through Christ.

But is there not a compulsion to the Christian to observe one day in the week sacred to the Lord? Yes, we answer; there is an obligation upon him such as there is upon no one else in the world. He is obligated by his Covenant to the Lord to keep every day sacred to the Lord. Every day he is to love the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his mind, with all his being, with all his strength; every day he is to love his neighbor as himself. And while striving to the best of his ability to conform to this spirit of the divine law, and while

realizing that the blood of Jesus Christ our Redeemer cleanses us from all imperfections contrary to our intentions—these may rest in the peace and joy of the Lord continually. “We which believe do enter into rest.”

There is no day of the week commanded to the spiritual Israelite as respects physical or mental rest—the latter they may have always, and the former may be ordered by human regulations for one day or for another. The Christian is commanded to be subject to the laws that be, in all such matters as are non-essential, not matters of conscience.

THE RIGHT USE OF LIBERTY

Let us remember, however, that our liberty in Christ is the liberty from the weight and condemnation of sin and death. Let us not think specially of a liberty from the Jewish restraints of the Seventh day nor think especially of the fact that no day above another has been commanded upon Christians in the Bible. Let us rather consider this liberty as of minor consequence and importance as compared with our liberation from the power of sin and death.

If one day or another be set apart by human law-givers, let us observe their commands. Let us be subject to every ordinance of men. In Christian lands generally the first day of the week is set apart by law. Shall we ignore this law and claim that God has put no such law upon us and that we should have our liberty to do business, etc.? Nay, verily; rather, on the other hand, let us rejoice that there is a law which sets apart one day in seven for rest from business, etc. Let us use that day as wisely and as well as we are able for our spiritual upbuilding and for assistance to others. What a blessing we have in this provision! How convenient it makes it for us to assemble ourselves together for worship, praise, the study of the divine Word! And if earthly laws provided more than one Sabbath (rest) day in the week we might well rejoice in that also, for it would afford us that much more opportunity for spiritual refreshment and fellowship.

Nor should our knowledge of the liberty we enjoy in Christ ever be used in such a manner that it might stumble others. Our observance of the Sabbath enjoined by the law of the land should be most complete—to the very letter—that our good be not evil spoken of—that our liberty in Christ and freedom from the Mosaic law be not misunderstood to be a business or pleasure license, but a privilege and opportunity for the worship and service of the Lord, and the building up of the brethren in the most holy faith, “once delivered to the saints.”

WHO CHANGED THE SABBATH DAY?

Often the question is asked, Who changed the Sabbath day to Sunday? The proper answer is that nobody changed it. The seventh day (Saturday) is still as obligatory upon the Jew as it ever was.

The early Christians observed the seventh day for a long time because it was the law of the land, which gave them a favorable opportunity for meeting for praise, prayer and the study of God's Word. In addition, the fact that Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week, and that he met with them on that day, led them to meet again and again on the first day, in hope that he would again appear: thus gradually it became a custom for them to meet on that day for Christian fellowship. In this way, so far as we know, both the first day and the seventh day of the week were observed by Christians for quite a time, but neither was understood to be obligatory—a bondage. Both days were privileges. And as many other days of the week as circumstances would permit were used in praising God and building one another up in the most holy faith, just as God's people are doing, or should be doing, in this, our day.

Are we told that a pope once designated that the first day of the week should be observed by Christians as the Christian Sabbath? We answer that this may be so, but that neither popes nor any beings, not even the apostles, could have right to add to or to take from the Word of God. St. Paul particularly warned the church against coming into bondage to the Jewish customs of observing new moons and Sabbaths as though these were obligations upon Christians. The Son of God has made us free—free indeed. But our freedom from the Law Covenant of Israel enables us the more and the better to observe the very spirit of the divine law daily, hourly, and to present our bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God through the merit of our Redeemer.

DEEDS, NOT WORDS

“They do the least
Who talk the most,
Whose good designs
Are all their boast;
Let words be few.

“They do the most
Whose lives possess
The sterling stamp
Of righteousness;
For deeds are true.”

A FAITH FOUNDATION NECESSARY

LUKE 6:39-49.—JUNE 9.

"Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."—Jas. 1:22.

The Great Teacher in today's lesson emphasizes the necessity of knowledge and of a faith built thereupon. The blind leading the blind represent the ignorant leading the ignorant into difficulties, into the ditch. In the mental blindness of the past many Christians assumed that the Master here taught that the blind leaders and the blind followers of our day would all fall into the pit of eternal torment, but not so. The thought is that they will stumble and experience injury instead of reaching the desired destination.

The destination sought by the Jews was fellowship with and relationship to God—his highest favor, mentioned to Abraham, saying, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." St. Paul says of that promise, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh, but the election hath obtained it and the rest were blinded." (Rom. 11:7) The entire Jewish race was blinded and turned aside and fell into the pit—into confusion, darkness, separation from God. This was the very matter against which Jesus forewarned them. They were following the lead of the scribes and Pharisees and Doctors of the Law, all of whom were blind leaders who misled their too trusting followers. The disciple or follower will not fare better than his master or leader or teacher; he cannot hope for better results than his leader.

How important, then, that God's people recognize the true Leader, Jesus, that they hear his voice, and heed not the voice of others. In the present, in the ending of this Gospel age, we have a condition of things very similar to that which obtained in the end of the Jewish age. We have many great, learned and wise men in all the denominations of Christendom, as the Jews had in Jesus' day in all their different sects. It is equally important that we take heed that we do not follow blind leaders today—in fact, it is much more important. Why should we follow any of the creeds when now we have the Word of God in such convenient form and when all are able to read it? Who cannot rejoice that recently the Pope issued instructions that the Roman Catholic bishops should encourage Catholics to study the Bible? How it would rejoice us to find the Protestant leaders similarly urging the Word of God upon their peoples!

Alas! on the contrary, we find that many of the great and wise of the principal pulpits of the world are undermining the faith of the people by telling them that the Bible is not divinely inspired, that Moses and the Prophets did not write the books ascribed to them, and hence indirectly saying that Jesus and the Apostles were deceived when they made quotations from the Old Testament and ascribed them to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Moses, Habakkuk, etc. These great men style themselves Higher Critics and endorse the theory of Evolution, that humanity is undergoing a process of evolution from monkey-likeness to God-likeness. They are thus indirectly telling their people that there was no fall from God's image and likeness, that there was no sin committed, no sentence for sin, no Redeemer from sin and its sentence and that restitution is not to be hoped for nor to be desired.—Acts 3:19-21.

Surely the Great Teacher's advice not to follow blind leaders was never more needed than in our day. Blessed will they be who heed the warning, and by it will be guided back to a more thorough study of the words of the Great Teacher, his apostles and the prophets.

HUMILITY A CHARACTER FOUNDATION

The parable of a man with a beam in his own eye trying to pick a mote out of his brother's eye was a forceful method whereby the Master inculcated the necessity of humility on the part of those who would be taught of God. Humility is here as elsewhere put as a foundation virtue. The Latin word for humility is *humus*, ground. This implies that it is the soil out of which other virtues are produced. Those who think they know everything can learn nothing. As Chalmers has said: "The more a man does examine, the more does he discover the infirmities of his own character." As Wheatley remarked, "Ten thousand of the greatest faults in our neighbors are of less consequence to us than one of the smallest in ourselves." A knowledge of our sins and imperfections should

make and keep all humanity humble; but how beautiful it is to realize that the perfect Jesus was humble and that all the holy angels are so!

GRAPES OFF A BRAMBLE BUSH

While the Scriptures forbid God's people to judge one another, they do commend to us another kind of judging. We are not to judge in the sense of condemning, sentencing, etc., those who claim to be honest, sincere, reverential, merely because they differ from what we would expect; God knows their hearts and to his own Master each servant must stand or fall eventually.

But while not condemning the heart we are to judge of the outward conduct. The parable which our Lord in this lesson gives respecting the gathering of grapes from bramble bushes illustrates this point. God's people are likened to the grape-vine, which produces no thorns but luscious clusters of fruit. Mankind in general are likened to bramble bushes, ready to scratch, tear, injure, on the slightest provocation, and are merely self-sustaining, not bringing forth fruitage that would be a blessing to others. We are to distinguish between such characters and God's people: "By their fruits shall ye know them."

It is said that at times a bramble bush will be entirely covered by a vine, so that the grapes would appear to be coming from the bush. We are not to be mistaken. A good tree cannot bring forth an evil fruitage, neither can an injurious tree bring forth a good fruitage. The lesson, applied to humanity, is that those who are really God's people cannot live injurious lives or fruitless lives; they must be fruit-bearing else they are none of his. And should we find some of the fruits of the spirit commingling with a thorniness of life, an evil, injurious disposition, we are to assume that in some sense of the word the fruitage is merely put on and does not belong to the bramble-bush character.

It is therefore useless for any man to tell us that he has given his heart to the Lord in fulness of consecration and that he has received the sanctifying influences of the holy Spirit and yet find him rejoicing in sin, taking pleasure in iniquity, injustice, selfishness and a course of life injurious to his neighbors. If his heart be changed the results will be manifest in his daily life, because "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

THE HOUSE ON THE ROCK

The closing parable of this lesson is in full tune with its opening verse. In the first parable the blind who trust to the leadership of the blind fall into the ditch. In the parable now before us the picture is that of a householder. If he be wise he will not build upon the shifting sands, which either a wind storm or a rain storm may undermine, and cause a wreck, but he will seek a solid, rock foundation which will endure the storm.

This parable illustrates two classes of believers. Both hear the Great Teacher's instructions and both believe and both rear faith structures and entertain heavenly hopes. But the one is more prudent, more careful than the other. One seeks for the doctrines and principles of the divine Word, and builds his faith structure upon that true foundation which the divine revelation affords. His faith cannot fail whatever storms may assail; it is surely founded on the divine promises.

The unwise believer takes too much for granted and builds upon the traditions of the elders, the creeds of the dark ages, etc. He fails to appreciate the necessity for having a proper foundation for his faith and his works. In the time of stress and storm with which this age will end all such will find the foundation swept from under their faith structure. There will be a general fall of Babylon, as the Scriptures declare—everything not well founded upon the sure Word of God will give way; "That day shall declare it." St. Paul mentions the same class and applies the lesson specially to our day in his letter to the Corinthians. Those whose faith structure will fail will thereby suffer great loss, though they themselves may be saved as by fire—through great tribulation.—1 Cor. 3:13-15.

GENERAL CONVENTION JUNE 1-9

PERTLE SPRINGS, MO. (CHAUTAUQUA GROUNDS)

This convention has been specially arranged for the convenience of Bible students within a radius of a thousand miles from Kansas City. We have no doubt, however, that many will be in attendance from still greater distances. The place itself is ideal and strictly first-class in every particular. It

borders a beautiful lake and has free access to the health-giving spring from which it takes its name.

Many will be able to attend this convention who could not conveniently come to one in the East by reason of the cost in money and time. Our expectation is that this will be one of

our most enjoyable conventions. We never had a better situation as respects conditions surrounding, quiet, etc.

The proprietors of the Chautauqua are also the owners of a large hotel there and of rooming flats in Warrensburg. They guarantee comfortable accommodations for a thousand persons at \$1.50 a day. Aside from this we are arranging with private householders in Warrensburg for as many more at \$1.00 each, two in a room. The round-trip fare to Pertle Springs daily will make the amount \$1.10. However, none would best reckon on less than \$1.25 per day.

Excursion rates are already in operation, but these are being extended so that a fare of not more than four cents per mile for the round-trip may be expected to be in operation by the time you receive this notice.

The speakers for the convention will include some of the very best. Brother Rutherford will be Chairman, and Brother Russell will be in attendance also. The sessions will begin Sunday, June 2, at the Springs, continue there throughout the week and adjourn to conclude at Kansas City June 9.

Decide as quickly as possible whether or not you will attend this convention. If you decide to attend, write immediately to the Society's representative, N. Engle, Warrensburg,

Mo., stating what priced accommodations you desire and, if you will not be staying the entire time, which days you will be in attendance.

We hope for a grand reunion at Pertle Springs and for a season of spiritual refreshment. To this end we exhort all who attend to come praying that the Lord will bless them, not only in receiving a blessing, but also in dispensing one to others. We are sure, as on other occasions, not to go away empty, but to carry with us spiritual blessings for the refreshment of those at home not permitted to attend.

HARVESTERS' DAY AT THE CONVENTION

The program for the convention includes a "Harvest Workers' Day." Noting this, one dear friend who has received great spiritual profit through the colporteur service has proffered assistance to all the colporteurs of the Society in attendance to the extent of \$5—to all who shall have been in the regular colporteur work for at least three months prior to the convention. We have no doubt that this proposal will be helpful to some who might not otherwise be able to bear the expense. The money is deposited with the Colporteur Department and will be credited on the accounts or handed over in money, as may best suit the convenience of the receivers.

"LEAST IN THE KINGDOM"

MATTHEW 11:2-19.—JUNE 16.

"Amongst them that are born of woman there is none greater than John; yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."—Luke 7:28.

It would be difficult to express in words a higher tribute to John the Baptist than Jesus paid him in our text. Again he said, "There hath not risen a greater Prophet than John the Baptist." If then John was so holy a man, so great a man from the divine standpoint, why did our Lord in this text declare that the least in the kingdom of heaven would be greater than John? This text has puzzled Bible exponents for many a day. It has seemed to many to be contradictory.

But just as soon as we turn on the light contained in that word "kingdom," the entire subject becomes clear. God had promised a Messianic kingdom, and Jesus had come that he might be the Head of that kingdom. The steps leading to the kingdom honors and glories were steps of obedience to God, even unto death, and these steps Jesus had begun to take. On the cross he declared, "It is finished." He had finished the work of proving Himself loyal to God and to the truth even unto death on the cross.

Jesus thus became the Great Conqueror, the great High Priest, the great King of Glory, being exalted to the heavenly state in his resurrection. But, as the Great King, he was to have associated with him in his throne, his bride class. As the Great Priest, he was to have an under-priesthood, a "royal priesthood." As the Great Judge of the world, he was to have associates; as St. Paul declares, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?"—1 Cor. 6:2.

In the divine plan this company of associates with Jesus in his glorious kingdom were as much foreknown and foreordained as was he and his share in the kingdom. As it was necessary for him to undergo trials and testings of loyalty unto death, so it must be with the class called to be his associates—"He was tempted in all points like as we are." Thus his message is, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne." These would be followers in his footsteps, none could precede him. His work was necessary first, to open up for his followers a new and living way, through the veil—that is to say, through his flesh—through his sacrifice.

"SOME BETTER THING FOR US"

While about five hundred brethren became Jesus' consecrated followers during his earthly ministry, they were not then accepted of the Father as sons, and not begotten of the holy Spirit until Pentecost. God would not recognize any as sons until Jesus had finished his sacrifice, and, as the great Advocate, "Appeared in the presence of God for us"—as our Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. John did not belong to this class, just as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets did not belong to it. In God's providence their reward will be different from that of the church—theirs will be an earthly reward. They will be resurrected to human perfection. They will have to do with the human phase of the kingdom, which amongst men will represent Messiah and the church, who will be spirit beings, but invisible to men, and whose dealings with mankind will be through those noble characters, the ancient worthies.

We are not to infer that those glorious characters mentioned in the Scriptures who lived before Christ's time were

ignoble or less faithful than the Gospel church, but merely that God promised them the earthly perfection, while he has promised the bride of Christ the heavenly perfection, to attain perfection gradually during the thousand years of Messiah's reign; the record is that they will come forth as perfect human beings. That will be the reward of their faithfulness. St. Paul explains the entire matter in Hebrews, the 11th chapter. He tells of the faith and heroism of those Ancient Worthies and that "they had this testimony, that they pleased God." There will be no necessity for testing them in the future. Their acceptance with God is already proven and declared.

Nevertheless, in God's order the earthly kingdom and restitution blessings for the world cannot begin until the kingdom class, Christ and the church, shall first be completed. Thus the Apostle declares, "All these died in faith, not having received the (earthly) things promised to them, God having provided some better thing for us (the church), that they, without us, should not be made perfect." The glorification of the church, her resurrection to perfection, must first be accomplished before the blessings through them can proceed to the natural seed of Abraham, and then through Israel to all nations.—Heb. 11:38-40.

NOT THE BRIDE BUT THE FRIEND

John the Baptist seemed to either comprehend the situation, or else he spoke the truth by prophecy when he declared "He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom, but the friend of the Bridegroom, hearing his voice, rejoiceth greatly. This my joy is fulfilled." He perceived that in God's providence he had a very honorable and blessed station and work to accomplish, but he was to be neither the Bridegroom nor a member of the bride class.

This does not imply that John was disappointed at the time, nor that he and the other ancient worthies will be disappointed when they come forth in the resurrection to find a bride class selected to a higher place than theirs. On the contrary, their cup of blessing being full, and never having been begotten of the holy Spirit to a spirit nature, they will not be able to comprehend or appreciate any blessings higher than their own. Just, for instance, as a fish in the water, seeing a bird flying in the air, would not be jealous of the bird and its greater freedom, but, on the contrary, would be better satisfied in the water, its natural element, so all natural men, not begotten of the holy Spirit, will appreciate more the earthly blessings which divine providence has provided for them.

In this very lesson Jesus intimates all the above, saying, "The law and the prophets were until John." He was the last of the prophets. He introduced Jesus, the Head of the kingdom class. Jesus further declared, "If ye are willing to receive it, this is Elias which was to come." That is to say, Those of you who are able to appreciate the matter may understand that John the Baptist did a work which was in full accord with the prophecy which declared Elijah must first come and do a reformatory work before Messiah would come.

CURIOSITY IS NOT RELIGION

Addressing the multitudes the Great Teacher inquired, Why did you go out to the wilderness to see John? Was it to hear

his message? Was it because God spoke through him as a Prophet as the wind makes music through the reeds? Or did you go out to see a man in fine clothing and of kingly state?

What really drew to the wilderness to John's teachings was that he was God's Prophet; as it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare the way before thee." This preparation for Jesus John made with the Jewish nation. His message was that the kingdom of heaven was about to be offered to them, and that only the holy would be ready to receive it.

But neither John nor his hearers fully realized in what way the kingdom would be offered to the people, namely, that it would be an offer, first, of a place or share in the kingdom, and that the terms would be full consecration to the Lord, to

walk "the narrow way." Jesus again testified, "If ye had received John ye would have received me."

In other words, all who received John's message were such as were in heart condition to receive Jesus; and the same spirit of indifference which permitted Herod to imprison John and to finally behead him marked the Jewish leaders and their unbelief. John as a Prophet was abstemious to the extreme, and they said, "He hath a devil." Jesus presented himself less peculiarly, eating and drinking and being clothed as other people, and of him they said, "Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Thus was it demonstrated that the fault was not in the manifestation of God's providence, but in the hearts of the majority of the Jews.

SOME INTERESTING QUESTIONS

MESSIAH'S KINGDOM WILL BE SPIRITUAL

Question.—What is meant by Messiah's kingdom?

Answer.—Our understanding is that Messiah's kingdom will be a spiritual one, invisible to mortals, yet all-powerful for the accomplishment of the great things promised in the law and the prophets. The empire which he will establish, invisible to men, will take the place of the empire of Satan, likewise invisible. The King of Glory will replace the prince of darkness. Principal amongst Messiah's earthly agents and representatives will be Abraham, Isaac and all the prophets, raised to full, human perfection. Instead of their being, as heretofore, the fathers, they shall be the children of Messiah, whom he will make "princes in all the earth." (Psa. 45:16) To this kingdom the nation of Israel will speedily unite. Eventually every nation will come into harmony with Messiah, and all people will be privileged to come in under Israel's New Covenant, then established by the great "Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in."—Jer. 31:31-34; Mal. 3:1-3.

The glorious Messiah, whom the Jews identify with "Michael, the great Prince, which standeth for thy people" (Dan. 12:1), the Mohammedans also expect, and identify him with Mohammed of the past. The Free Masons also expect the same glorious personage and, in their traditions, identify him with Hiram Abiff, the great Master Mason. This same great Messiah, Michael, the Archangel, the antitypical Melchizedek, Priest as well as King, we identify as "the Man Jesus Christ, who gave himself a ransom-price for all, to be testified in due time."—1 Tim. 2:6.

But when the Great King shall appear in his glory and establish his kingdom with Israel, he will be, as promised by the prophets, "The desire of all nations." (Hag. 2:7) Then all the blinded eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped. (Isa. 35:5) Then, who he is, and how he should be identified with Abraham's seed and David's line, will be clearly known to all in heaven and all on earth. Not now, but when the King shall reign in righteousness, all shall fully understand the significance of Zechariah's prophecy (12:7-10) and of Psa. 22:16. Content that Messiah shall show the truth in his day of revelation, we are glad to point Jews, Mohammedans, Christians, all, to the glorious Messiah, and the great work of blessing for all the nations, which God will accomplish, through the seed of Abraham, according to his covenant and his oath.

PERFECTION WILL INSURE PROTECTION AGAINST ACCIDENTS

Question.—Will there be accidents and death during the Millennial aside from those of sinners going into the second death?

Answer.—While the reign of Christ will be a reign of righteousness unto life, we are not to understand that Adamic death will be at an end as soon as Messiah has begun his reign, for it is stated that he must reign until he has put down all enemies. (1 Cor. 15:25, 26) It is understood that people will be more or less in the Adamic death during the thousand years and will rise gradually out of Adamic imperfection and death to the perfection of the human nature. We should remember that the kingdom as it will be established in the beginning of the Millennial age will consist of the New Jerusalem—that is, the glorified church, of which Christ is the Head. (Rev. 21:1-8) During the thousand years the world will be coming into accord with this arrangement. For all such as will come into harmony there will be a blessed arrangement by which they will be protected from any penalty for imperfections. We may reasonably suppose that after perfection is reached there will be no more accidents, just as we have reason to suppose that in heaven there is no necessity for surgeons, doctors, ambulances, etc. "Nothing shall hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain [kingdom]." (Isa. 11:9) God's will shall be

done on earth as it is done in heaven. We read that there shall be no more sighing and no more crying and no more dying.

THE FINAL TESTING WILL DETERMINE IT

Question.—Will restitution include the right to everlasting life, or will the right to everlasting life be determined by the final testing that will come at the end of the Millennial age?

Answer.—Perfection was given to Adam originally; and by virtue of his perfection he had a right to continue to live, if he were obedient. But as God saw fit to test Father Adam, so he will test the human family. And the final test, after the kingdom shall have been turned over to the Father, will be by way of testing their worthiness to attain these life-rights and to keep them everlastingly. The thousand years of Christ's reign will be for bringing mankind to perfection. At the end of that reign those who have reached perfection will be delivered over to the Father. The New Covenant will have accomplished for them all that it was intended to accomplish. But before God determines them worthy of the fullness of his everlasting life, he will see that all are tried individually and without any Mediator between. We may be sure that the test will be a crucial and a just one.

APPLICABLE TO TWO CLASSES

Question.—To whom is the Apostle speaking when he says, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies living sacrifices"?—Rom. 12:1.

Answer.—These words are properly applicable to two classes. First, they apply to a class termed "brethren," in the sense that they are no longer opponents, but sympathetically in harmony with the consecrated. The Apostle was urging these to complete the work of grace which they had already begun. Secondly, the text applies to those who have made the consecration, and urges them to complete the work. I urge you, brethren, that day by day you attend to this matter of presenting your bodies living sacrifices until the work be accomplished. This, he says, is a reasonable service, acceptable to God.

Although St. Paul does not say how the great Advocate will make the sacrifice acceptable, yet this is to be understood by Christians, who know that they are accepted in the Beloved. After that class have given up their lives, after they have put all in the Lord's hands, they understand that they, themselves, as members of the body of Christ, are to die daily. Hence it is that daily an opportunity comes to us to lay down life in the Lord's service. While this is a daily dying, yet, in another sense of the word, it is a sacrifice to the end of life. Our Lord Jesus said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50) In one sense, his sacrifice was accepted at Jordan. In another sense it was day by day until that baptism was completed on the cross and he cried, "It is finished!"

MAY HAVE TWO APPLICATIONS

Question.—"For, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water." (Isaiah 3:1) What does this mean?

Answer.—There was a famine which came upon Judea. The people did not have enough to eat or to drink. They are still in very much the condition of Ishmael at the time when Hagar laid him down to die. During the Gospel age the poor Jews have been famishing. They have been without any communication whatever with God.

The same Prophet, from whose inspired writings the above text is taken, tells us of another class whose "bread shall be given them, whose water shall be sure." (Isa. 33:16) They will be well cared for, well protected, and will have both bread and water. The text may have applied to the Jews at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and may apply to any Jews and others who, since that time, have put their trust in the

Lord and to whom He has supplied what was needed for the strengthening of their lives. As we look about us today we find many of nominal Israel hungry, thirsty. They endeavor to make themselves think that they are well fed; and the majority of them do not realize that they are poor and naked

and unfed and blind. In the meantime the Church of Christ is in the protected place. Everything is working together for good to them. Their bread and water is sure. "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly"; "the meek will he guide in judgment; the meek will he teach his way."

AND SHE WAS A SINNER

LUKE 7:36-50.—JUNE 23.

"Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

1 Timothy 1:15.

The Gospel of Christ is the message of divine compassion toward sinners. All religions recognize sin and propose reconciliation with God—by works of charity, by voluntary self-torture, or by future torments. None of the heathen gods have any touch of sympathy for humanity; they are cold, cruel, vindictive. The Bible, of all the religious books we know of, alone tells of a God touched with the feeling of human infirmities and with sympathy toward sinners. "God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly."—Rom. 5:8.

Note the expressions of the Scriptures indicating divine compassion: "God looked down from his holy habitation to behold and to hear the groaning of the prisoners"—the suffering of humanity under the death penalty, and the incidental aches and pains of our fallen condition. He did more than look, he did more than pity; his right arm of divine power in due time began to bring deliverance for the captives of sin and death. Already he has sent his Son and thus provided a ransom price for the sins of the whole world. Already his Son has been glorified, and merely awaits the time for the establishment of his kingdom.

Meantime divine grace has been still further manifested in the invitation granted to a "little flock," to be justified by faith and to be sanctified by the High Priest's offering of them, and thus to become new creatures, joint-heirs in his kingdom. Still the Scriptures tell us of God's pursuing love and mercy. He is unwilling that any should perish, but wills, on the contrary, that all shall have an opportunity to turn to him that they may have everlasting life. It is for this very purpose that Messiah's kingdom will be established in great glory and with full power. God's right arm is not shortened. In due time it will bring the salvation for which the poor groaning creation has so long waited. It will come with the manifestation of the Sons of God in kingdom power.—Rom. 8:19.

Eventually the Redeemer "shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." Eventually the Heavenly Father's plan will be so outworked that every creature in heaven and earth and under the earth shall be heard saying, "Praise and glory and honor, dominion and might be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever." Eventually God, through the Messianic kingdom, "shall wipe away all tears from off all faces," and cause the reproach of being His people to disappear from the earth. (Rev. 21:4; Isa. 25:8) So superior is this God of the Bible and of Christianity to all the misconceptions of heathendom and Christendom that, when the glorious day of Messiah's kingdom shall have been fully ushered in, the glory of our God will be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.—Isa. 40:5.

A WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER

Our Redeemer possessed and exemplified the Heavenly Father's love and mercy. He declared that he was merely the exponent of the Father's will, and hence of the Father's love and sympathy. Our Lord's sympathy is presented not only in this lesson but also in many others, and all of his followers do well to cultivate the same spirit. Jesus was not sympathetic with the sins of the people, but with the people themselves. He realized as few do the real difficulty with the majority of sinners. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, in sin did my mother conceive me!" exclaimed the Prophet. We are sinners by heredity. We have inherited partially depraved minds, partially unbalanced brains and morals.

St. Paul, speaking of the very noblest class, declares, "We cannot do the things which we would"—any of us; hence all humanity are sinners. "There is none righteous, no, not one." Therefore it is merely a question of the degree of sinfulness, and the degree is often measured by the degree of inherited weakness, or the degree of surrounding temptations. The really reprehensible and blameworthy sinners are those who sin wilfully, deliberately, knowingly, intentionally, without either will or effort to resist sin. But it is not ours to judge which these are. Indeed, we are incompetent to judge, we cannot read the heart, we cannot fully appreciate the degree of the temptation and the weakness of the tempted. Hence the Master said, "Judge nothing before the time." In due time the saints will judge the world, but not now.

Now we must follow the Master's example; and we may well do this because, although he knew what was in man, as we could not know, he was very charitable, which leads us to suppose that if we were perfect we would be all the more charitable towards sinners, though not at all sympathetic with sin.

Who can read the New Testament Gospel narratives without realizing that Jesus was indeed a "Friend of sinners," as was charged against him by the Pharisees? And is not this the feature of the Bible which specially commends it to humanity? With the exception of the wilful sinners, whom we must hope are few, there comes a time when sin is seen in its true color and is detested. Then is the time when the Gospel message from the friend of sinners specially appeals to such. All seem to know instinctively that Jesus stands ready to be the friend and helper of all who come to the Father through him.

Jesus had accepted an invitation to dine at a Pharisee's house. The dinner had begun. Resting upon one arm they used the other for handling the food. After the custom of the times, they reclined upon low tables or couches, their heads toward the center where the food was placed. A curtain separated the dining room from the outer court.

While the dinner was progressing a woman "who was a sinner," a harlot, deeply penitent, entered. She had in her hand some precious perfume, with which she intended to anoint the Savior's feet, as was sometimes done with dignitaries of that time. Her heart was full, and tears gushed from her eyes while she sought to open the bottle; they fell like rain upon Jesus' feet, evidently quite contrary to the woman's intention. She was dishonoring the very feet she intended to honor. Loosening her hair, she used it as a towel, entirely regardless of the fact that for a woman at that time it was considered dishonorable to let down her hair in public; but intent upon her errand she dried the feet and poured the precious perfume upon them, presumably as an honor to the One from whom she had heard "wonderful words of life"—words of divine compassion and pity for sinners, words of hope for herself.

TWO DEBTORS AND THEIR LOVE

The host of the occasion watched Jesus to see how he would receive this manifestation of loving devotion, saying in his heart, If this man were a prophet, he would know that the woman offering him this honor is disreputable. He would denounce her and bid her, "Begone," and not to touch him. Jesus knew his thoughts and answered him in parabolic form, saying, "A certain creditor had two debtors, one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. Neither could pay and he forgave them both. Which of them will love him most?" The Pharisee replied, "I suppose he to whom most was forgiven." Jesus agreed with him.

Then Jesus made application of the matter: turning to the woman, he said to his host, Seest thou this woman, who washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair? You are the host of the occasion, yet you did not offer me water for the washing of my feet, as is customary in our land to do to those whom we desire to honor. You gave me no kiss, as is customary amongst friends, but this woman has repeatedly kissed my feet. "You did not anoint my head with oil, but she hath anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." And he said to the woman, "Thy sins are forgiven."

Is not this to some extent an illustration and an explanation of the fact that the majority of those who love the Lord most are such as realize their own sinful and fallen condition most and who appreciate most the forgiving love of God manifested in Jesus? Is it not true today also that those who are most moral, and therefore might be said to have less to be forgiven, have correspondingly less love?

This should not be the case, however. The less degraded ought naturally to be the more able to love and to appreciate divine goodness and love and the more willing to present their little all in divine service.